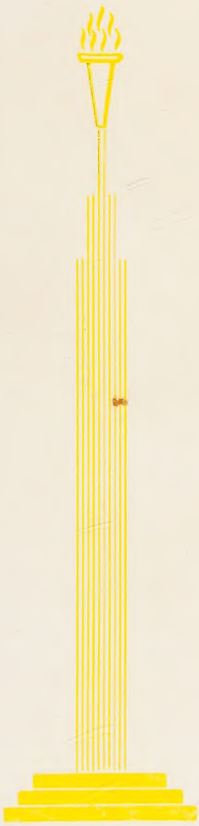
Ruth:

The Satisfied Stranger

22.3507
1457

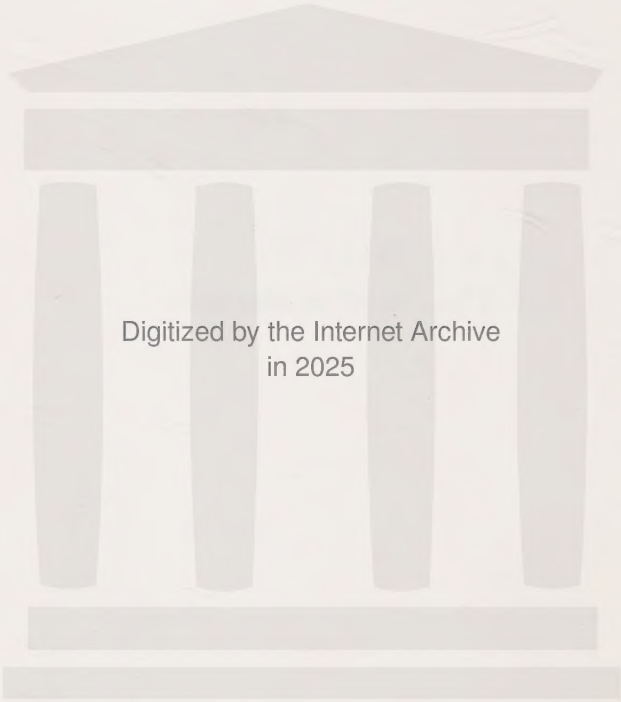


Philip Mauro

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

RUTH:
The Satisfied Stranger


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/ruthsatisfiedstr0000phil_n8b6

RUTH:
THE SATISFIED STRANGER

By
PHILIP MAURO

Bible Truth Depot
Swengel, Pa.

June 1, 1963

LIBRARY
CENTRAL BAPTIST SEMINARY
KANSAS CITY 2, KANSAS

Copyright, 1920, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

"Published by permission of the Fleming H. Revell Co."

Photolithoprinted by
MALLOY LITHOGRAPHING, INC.
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1457

FOREWORD

THE Book of Ruth contains lessons peculiarly and strikingly applicable to these last days; and the discovery of that impressive fact is what has led to the writing of this present volume.

The Book of Ruth is seemingly but a short pastoral narrative told with the utmost simplicity, bringing before us a succession of misfortunes that befell an obscure family belonging to a village which was one of "the least among the thousands of Judah." We read how that family departed from its home under the stress of famine, and sought to better itself by going down to the country of Moab; how calamity after calamity fell upon them there, until the mother was bereft of husband and sons and left with two heathen daughters-in-law. Thus was the family reduced to three childless widows. At this extremity, when their fortunes were at the lowest ebb and in a state of utter hopelessness, we see God intervening in mercy and working in a marvellous though hidden way to give to the virtually extinct family of Elimelech a renewed existence in Israel and a wondrous place in the accomplishment of His eternal purposes. We see moreover that, in reviving that perishing house, and in working out at the same

47578

time His own mighty plans, God chose as His instrument one of the "weak," "foolish" and "base" things of the world, a childless widow, the daughter of a detested and detestable people. All this is easy to see, and the contemplation thereof has brought comfort and blessing to many thousands of the Lord's people.

But, underneath the unfolding of this simple tale, and in addition to its important bearing on the accomplishment of God's plan of redemption, lie specific lessons of deepest interest for our own times, and foreshadowings "of good things to come"—treasures to be sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Those things, moreover, though not found on the surface, are easy to be understood; and the application thereof can readily be made by those to whom spiritual understanding has been given—and that takes in all the children of God.

It is but lately that the writer has come upon the deeper lessons of this inspired history, lessons which seem so peculiarly applicable to these last days; and the interest they have awakened among the Lord's people, when pointed out orally, has induced the present attempt to set them forth in writing.

CONTENTS

I. "When the Judges Ruled" 9
II. "No King in Israel" 19
III. "The Time That the House of God Was in Shiloh" 31
IV. "From the Country of Moab" 46
V. Good News—"Heard in the Country of Moab" 56
VI. Ruth's Choice 68
VII. "Bethlehem in the Beginning of Barley Harvest" 82
VIII. Ruth's "Hap" 95
IX. "The Congregation of the Lord" . 107
X. "Under His Wings" 123
XI. "The Goel" 137
XII. "Not Left Without a Kinsman" .. 150
XIII. "The Son of Man" 162
XIV. "The Part of a Kinsman" 170
XV. How Ruth Found Rest 180
XVI. "The Mother of Us All" 189
XVII. The Nearer Kinsman 199
XVIII. Raising Up "the Name of the Dead" 212

I

"WHEN THE JUDGES RULED"

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land" (RUTH 1: 1).

THE book of Ruth has a charm of its own, which is more easily appreciated than defined. Its leading characters, apart from Boaz, are poor and humble—two childless widows, one of them a daughter of the abhorred race of Moab. The incidents recorded in these few brief chapters are quite ordinary—almost commonplace. The style of the book is artless in the extreme, quite devoid of sensationalism and free from all literary artifices. The events are recited in few and simple words. There are no dramatic situations, no attempts to heighten the effect of the events described. Nevertheless, the story of Ruth the Moabitess grasps the attention even of the most indifferent reader, and leaves upon his mind an impression of refreshing wholesomeness and sweetness which more ambitious literary efforts, dealing with more exciting incidents, wholly fail to create.

We shall not seek the reasons why this simple story has produced so great an impression upon

so many people in all parts of the world and in all the centuries since it was written, or why it is just as fresh and as interesting to-day as then. It does not lie in the path of our present purpose to conduct such an inquiry. So we merely suggest it and pass on.

It is a point of interest to those who find perfection in every part of the Word of God that Ruth is the *eighth book* of the Bible. As such it suggests a *new beginning* in God's dealings with men. The number eight is associated in Scripture with the commencement of a new series, seven being the number of completeness. Eight is the resurrection number, the first day of a new week being the *eighth* day. Hence we would expect to see, in this book, the hand of God doing a *new work,* with a view to bringing about a new order of things. We would also expect to find the power of God manifested just at the moment when the tide of human affairs is at its *lowest ebb,* and to see Him accomplishing a great deliverance in a situation of complete human failure, and choosing as His instruments "the weak things of the world." And such are indeed the characteristics of the book of Ruth; and not only so, but those characteristics are manifested in a very striking way. God here shows Himself as the God Who quickens the dead, and displays His power to accomplish great deliverances through the weakest of instruments.

The events recorded in the book of Ruth derive their significance in large measure from the fact that they occurred "in the days when the judges ruled." The first words of the book direct attention to that fact; and this in turn suggests an inquiry as to just what was the peculiar character of those days.

The preceding book of Judges completes a series of seven books. It marks a *distinct stage* in the history of God's dealings with the world, and particularly in His dealings with the people Israel, whom He had chosen for His own people in order that He might dwell among them, and that they might make His Name honorable among men. As we turn the pages of the dismal and depressing book of Judges, and note the increasing apostasy of God's people and their increasing moral corruption, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that God's declared purpose in choosing the Israelites to be His people was about to end in utter defeat; and that all His marvelous dealings with them, His gracious acts and mighty works in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness and in Canaan, had been altogether in vain.

God had, *by grace alone,* delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, supplied them with bread from heaven and water out of the rock, suffered their murmurs for forty years in the wilderness, brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey, and driven out the in-

habitants of that land from before them. All this was of grace, in fulfillment of God's promise to the fathers. When Joshua was about to go the way of all the earth, he could boldly say to the children of Israel, without fear of contradiction: "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls that *not one thing* hath failed of all the *good things* which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Josh. 23:14). And the Lord Himself, in His final message to them by Joshua, rehearsed briefly the chief incidents of His dealings with them from the call of Abraham even to that day, closing the recital with these words: "And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them. Of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat" (Josh. 24:13). This was the purest *grace.*

Having done everything for them freely, and without any merit on their part (but just the reverse), God then called upon them to be faithful to Him: in a word, He required that they should *be* what He had made them, a people for His own possession. As He said: "Now *therefore*"—that is, in response to all that God had freely done for them—"fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other

side of the flood and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord" (Ver. 14).

This is ever the principle of God's dealings with those whom He calls to be His people. He does everything for them freely and without regard to their deserts; and then, having redeemed them and made them His own people by grace alone, He urges them to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and to yield themselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

But Israel regarded not the marvelous works of God on their behalf, nor His innumerable acts of mercy and loving kindness; nor did they give heed either to His admonitions or to His solemn warnings so clearly given through Moses and Joshua. They turned away from the Lord to serve other gods, and they adopted the customs of the Canaanites who still survived. Thus they brought dishonor on the Name of the Lord and grievous troubles upon their own heads.

The people of God, whom He has saved by a great deliverance and bought for Himself at a great price, are ever in danger of turning away from Him to do *their own wills;* and particularly are they in danger of copying more or less the customs and ways of "the people of the land" among whom they dwell. For this

very reason the Name of the Lord suffers reproach at the present time; and moreover, as a further consequence, many evils are found among His people.

But, notwithstanding that the condition of the children of Israel became worse and worse, until their case seemed hopeless beyond possibility of recovery, God did not give them up, nor abandon His own purpose concerning them. Here is a strong encouragement for us at the present time; and the consolation we derive from this fact will be the greater in proportion as we realize the *close correspondence* between "the days when the judges ruled," and our own days. The writer has been greatly impressed by this remarkable correspondence, and therefore desires to point it out as clearly as possible to the reader. And not only so, but an attentive consideration of the things recorded in the book of Ruth will be further rewarded by a better understanding of what *God is doing in these last difficult times,* and of the remedies that are available to meet the evils that now exist among His people.

In reading the preceding book of Judges, we find that chief among the sad consequences of departure from God were (1) that the people fell under the power of various enemies, first one and then another, suffering grievous afflictions and hardships at their hands; (2) that the morals of the people were greatly cor-

rupted; and (3) that enmity and strife, even to the verge of the extermination of one of the tribes of Israel, arose among the people themselves.

Yet, even during that period of base ingratitude and gross apostasy, the people of Israel were not without repeated tokens of God's continued interest in them and of His unchanging love for them. Again and again, *when they called upon Him,* He delivered them out of the troubles they had brought upon their own heads. "Nevertheless," as it is written, "the Lord raised up judges (or saviours) which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods. They turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so" (Judg. 2:16, 17).

This discreditable period of Israel's history is recalled and graphically described in Psalm 106, in these words:

> "They did not destroy the nations concerning whom the Lord commanded them; but were mingled among the heathen and learned their works. And they served their idols, which were a snare unto them. Yea, they *sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,* and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, *whom they sacrificed unto the*

*idols of Canaan,** and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

"Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were *brought low* for their iniquity. *Nevertheless He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry.* And He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies" (Ps. 106:34-45).

But these repeated interventions by God in delivering His people when they cried to Him in their troubles, produced only temporary

*Is there not a sense in which the "sons and daughters" of believing parents are being similarly sacrificed in our day to the modern idol, "Education," by being subject, in their innocence and ignorance, to educational processes designed to prepare godless people for "careers" in a godless world? Has there not been much "innocent blood" spilled in this way? This should be seriously pondered by people of God to whom He has entrusted little ones to be taught—not heathen philosophy, and science falsely so-called—not worldly accomplishments, but—*His* ways and precepts. In the writer's booklet, "Believing on the Son of God," this important matter is discussed. At this point, it must suffice to say that among the things which believers' children learn at school, those which are *useful* in the true sense of the word, are very few and are easily taught them at home. On the other hand, the things they learn which are harmful, *and destructive to truth and godliness,* are many, and the influence of these, in most cases, abides.

periods of reviving. There was no permanent "rest" or season of tranquility. For no sooner were they, by God's mercy, released from the grasp of an enemy, than they began again to follow the desires of their own hearts, which led them far from Him and His ways. So there was need of a *new order of things;* and for this new order God began to prepare, in His own marvelous way, long before there was any outward indication of what He was doing.

And just here is where the book of Ruth comes in, not merely as a bright picture on the dark background of Israel's apostasy, or as a refreshing oasis in the dreary desert of their evil doings, but as a *vital connecting link between the old order and the new.*

The line of God's unchanging purpose was connected with the fortunes of that little family of Elimelech, which, in the endeavor to escape the "famine in the land," departed from Judea, and sought to better its circumstances by going to dwell in the land of Moab.

Just when this famine occurred is not stated; but, by a rough reckoning from the genealogy given in the last chapter of Ruth, it would appear that the exodus of Elimelech from Bethlehem to Moab occurred in the early part of the period of the Judges. For Nahshon, the grandfather of Boaz, was the prince of the tribe of Judah when the Israelites were first numbered in the wilderness (Num. 1:7). So it was but

a short stretch of time from the crossing of the Red Sea to Boaz. Moreover, Nahshon's son, Salmon, took Rahab to wife, which must have been soon after the Israelites entered Canaan; and of that marriage Boaz was born (Mat. 1:5). The whole period of the Judges, that is, from the death of Joshua to Samuel, was about 450 years (Acts 13:20). Hence, the famine mentioned in Ruth 1:1 must have occurred considerably nearer the beginning than the end of "the days when the Judges ruled." This is a point of some interest as showing that God begins preparing His remedy for an evil state of things long before the latter reaches its full development.

II

"NO KING IN ISRAEL"

THE concluding verse of the book of Judges claims our attention because of its deep significance and because it throws a clear light upon that period of Israel's history. The verse gives us a precise, though condensed, summary of the conditions which developed during the days of the Judges: "In those days there was *no king* in Israel; *every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judg. 21:25).

The history of the human race furnishes numerous and striking examples of what happens to men and nations when God allows them to *go their own way.* According to man's view of the matter, the state of things described in the verse quoted above would be perfectly ideal. Such a state of society,—that is to say, one permitting the largest measure of individual liberty—would, according to the most approved view-point of civilized twentieth-century man, present the desirable conditions under which men and peoples and nations, big and little, would enjoy the greatest attainable prosperity, and wherein all the peaceful arts and sciences that adorn the highest human culture and civili-

zation, would reach their fullest and most fruitful development. For that state of human society, wherein there is "no king"—that is, no one having authority to curb, restrain and control—and wherein, as a consequence, "*every* man" is free to do "that which is right in *his own* eyes," is a state approximating pure *Democracy,* for which "the world" is just now being made "safe," (so at least the distressed nations are being encouraged to believe) by means of as yet untried political expedients.

In other words, we have, in the days of the Judges, the only *democratic period* of the history of Israel. In Egypt they had no political existence at all, but were slaves to a foreign despot. In the wilderness, Moses was "*king* in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together" (Deut. 33:5). And, in Canaan, Joshua exercised the same kingly authority, God having decreed that any man who rebelled against Joshua, and who would not hearken to his words, should be put to death (Josh. 1:2-18). We read that "the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life" (Josh. 4:14).

Hence, it was well with the people during the days of Joshua; for though there were great conflicts with powerful enemies, and though there were occasional defeats and errors, nevertheless they were in practically continuous vic-

tory over their enemies; and they were, moreover, at peace among themselves, "striving *together*" for the possession and occupation of the land which God had given them.

What a difference during the next ensuing period, that of the Judges! It would be hard to find a greater contrast in the history of any people; and that difference came about notwithstanding the fact that, before the death of Joshua, the difficulties of taking possession of the land had been overcome, and the mighty enemies had been conquered, driven from their strong cities, and brought into a state of servitude.

According to man's most cherished notions the change from the autocracy of Moses and Joshua to the democratic era of the Judges was a great *advance,* and it should have introduced a period of unparalleled prosperity and progress in all departments of human activity. No conditions could be imagined more favorable to the development of all the conditions and possibilities of what is called "self-government." The people of Israel had a splendid start, a land abounding in the richest products of the earth, and the incomparable advantage of good laws. Moreover, an ample period of time—longer than from the discovery of America to the present day—was allowed for the great political experiment.

Therefore, while those who believe God and look to His Word for their light and guidance in this dark world will study the period of the Judges mainly for the spiritual lessons to be learned therefrom, it would be the part of wisdom for those who are shaping (or trying to, at least) the political destinies of the world at this critical hour, to learn from that book what conditions must inevitably develop in any society where there is *no king,* and where every man claims liberty to do that which is right in his own eyes.

The effect upon men and peoples of being allowed to go their own way, is seen on a grand scale in the history of the nations of the world up to the birth of Christ. Inasmuch as "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," God gave them the liberty they desired (Rom. 1:28). The moral and spiritual conditions to which their own ways eventually led them are concisely described in Romans 1:20-32, and the accuracy of that description has never been seriously disputed. Moreover, in this connection, it should be recalled that "the times of the Gentiles" started well, and that all the peoples of the world were given, first through Nebuchadnezzar, and then through his successor Darius, a clear testimony to the living God, and were required and commanded by royal decrees to serve Him alone (Dan. 4:1-37; 6:25-27).

But the lesson to be gleaned from the times of the Judges is the more important and impressive because the opportunities (advantageous or otherwise) which democracy affords were enjoyed, in this case, by a people who had *known God,* and to whom *the Word of God had been given.* We may learn, therefore, from the book of Judges (and learn it in the clearest way), that something more than a knowledge of God's revealed will is needed to restrain men from doing *their own will.* A *vital* need in *every* human society is AUTHORITY.

The late Poet Laureate of England remarked that a leading characteristic of the days in which we are living is "the decay of authority." In this saying we have a significant fact tersely expressed; and moreover, the process of decay has made much headway since that remark was uttered. It is a process foretold in the vision which God gave to King Nebuchadnezzar, as explained by Daniel the prophet. For the authority of Nebuchadnezzar, whose kingdom was represented by the "head of gold" seen in that vision, was *absolute;* but human history, during "the times of the Gentiles," (as foretold in that remarkable prophecy) was to witness the decline of governmental authority through the successive stages represented by the silver, the brass, the iron, and the iron mixed with earthenware, until the *last* stage of things political should be reached in "the toes of the feet,"

where there was "iron mixed with miry clay" (Dan. 2:42, 43). When the *toes* of a figure are reached we are, of course, at the very end. Hence we should not be surprised by what we read in the next words of that great prophecy:

> "In the days of those kings"—(or kingdoms, i. e., those states which are represented by the toes of the image, and in which the "iron" of governmental authority is weakened by a large admixture of the "clay" elements of common humanity)—"shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (v. 44).

That will be the Kingdom of Christ, which He will bring into the world at His second coming.

In giving us, in the book of Judges, an inspired account of the conditions existing during that period of Israel's history, God has been at pains to impress upon us that the evil developments of that time were due to the fact that there was then "no king in Israel." The recurrence of those words becomes like the refrain of a melancholy song. In chapter 17, verse 6, we read: "In those days there was *no king in Israel,* but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." And then follows the incident of the Levite who came to Micah's house, and hired himself to be Micah's priest; this incident being related as if it were the natural outcome of such conditions of individual freedom.

Again, at chapter 18, verse 1, we find the words: "In those days there was no king in Israel," introducing the account of the raid of the Danites. Also at the beginning of the 19th chapter we read: "And it came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel, that a certain Levite," etc., this being the introduction to the shocking and brutal incident which brings the book of Judges to a close, and which led to civil war by eleven tribes against the tribe of Benjamin, in which the latter became almost exterminated. And the only comment made upon this disgraceful episode is that contained in the last words of the book: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25).

The incident last referred to shows that the days of the Judges were days of increasing *moral corruption* and *violence.* Such was also the character of the days before the flood, when, as is written, the earth "was *corrupt* before God," for "all flesh had *corrupted his way* upon the earth"; and, furthermore, "the earth was filled with *violence*" (Gen. 6:11-13). It is very important that we take note of this, because the Lord Jesus Christ has foretold that "as it was in the days of Noe, *so* shall it be in the days of the Son of man" (Luke 17:26). We need not dwell upon this, for the resemblance of our own times to the days of the Judges in point of

moral corruption, and of violent methods to which men resort for the attainment of their ends, is apparent to every observer. And where shall the most confirmed "optimist" of our times look for the *authority* which shall exert itself to stay this rapidly spreading corruption, and hold in check the violence of men banded together, as were the Danites, for the accomplishment of their own ends, regardless of the rights or even the lives of others? Evidently, the world is not far from the days (indeed they are already fallen upon large parts of the world) when the advice to those who are pillaged by lawless groups of men will be: "Let not thy voice be heard among us" (in protest) "lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life with the lives of thy household" (Judg. 18:25).

Another striking feature of the days of the Judges, to which attention is particularly called in the sacred narrative, is *independency in things pertaining to the worship of God.* Such independency among the people of God is the sure indication of a bad spiritual condition. For it means the throwing off of the restraints of God's Word, the setting aside of His appointments, and the intrusion of human observances. It inevitably leads, moreover, to divisions and other serious evils.

That the people of the world should greatly prize and should insist upon religious freedom

is quite natural; for it is in keeping with the democratic principles now accepted by practically all the nations of the world. Such religious tolerance on the part of human governments, works, moreover, to the advantage of the Lord's people, and makes for the furtherance of the Gospel. In fact, it is the very condition for which they are taught to pray "first of all" (1 Tim. 2:1-7),* the object of that important instruction as to prayer being two-fold; *first,* that God's people themselves may lead a quiet and peaceable life, and *second,* that the Gospel of Christ may be preached to "all men," since God wills for "all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

The time was, and not so very long ago, when the rulers of the nations denied to God's saints the liberty to meet for praise and prayer, to read the Scriptures, and to preach the Gospel of His grace to sinners; and the same condition will prevail again under the approaching reign of anti-Christ. Therefore, we should be most thankful for, and should take full advantage of the present period of religious tolerance, which no doubt has been brought about

*The directions given to God's people in this Scripture in regard to making prayers, supplications and intercessions, and giving thanks for all men, especially *for kings and others in authority,* are much neglected, and doubtless there has been much suffering in consequence of that neglect. We would urge the great importance, in the present critical state of things throughout the world, of carrying out those directions.

in order that the Gospel-message may be carried to all parts of the world.

But this very condition of religious freedom gives rise to special dangers to the people of God, to whom His strict commands have been given with reference to separation from all the religious doings—rites, ceremonies and other observances of human origin—in which the natural heart of man takes delight.

The need for such strictness is obvious. Their own safety and welfare depend largely upon it; and it is needful also for the sake of the testimony of the Gospel which has been committed to their trust. For the world is teeming with religious systems of human origin, and with an endless variety of religious practices and observances, all of which tend to blind men's minds to the truth of God. On this account the lessons that are to be found in the 17th and 18th chapters of Judges are of much importance to the people of God.

The history of the nations of the world shows to what lengths of idolatry and superstition, and to what depths of moral degradation in the form of filthy religious rites and ceremonies, the most enlightened and progressive people will go, *when left to themselves.* And even in our own day, and in this highly favored nation, which has enjoyed from its first beginnings the light of the Holy Scriptures, we see that the religious freedom of a democratic era affords

conditions in which every system of error flourishes amazingly, and in which *all the worst heresies of bygone centuries* have sprung up into new life, and are carrying away millions of the most cultured and intelligent people to eternal destruction. Under these conditions, "the god of *this* age," whose business is to "blind the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. 4:4), enjoys the greatest possible advantages for accomplishing the destruction of men.

Happily for the people of the world (or that part of it at least in which we live) the "democracy" which is now in force, is democracy in *name* rather than in *fact.* That is to say, the form of government established in this country contains not a little of "the iron" of the old Roman State from which it sprang. And not only so, but democracy, as we have it, contains latent principles which, in times of emergency (as during the late war) can be quickly invoked to clothe the President with power of the most autocratic and far-reaching character. And it is, in fact, these *un*democratic features of modern "democracy" which give a measure of stability to the government, and constitute a safeguard against the spirit of *pure* democracy that is flaming up in the minds of discontented and restless millions.

Only in Russia, thus far, has the experiment of a form of government approaching ideal democracy been attempted. A description of

the results already manifested would fill volumes with its gruesome details. As a mere indication of what has developed in one short year of "Bolshevism," we quote from a recent despatch from London which, after declaring that in Russia at the present time "any restraint on sinful impulses or covetous desire is laughed to scorn," and that "the propaganda for *freedom of the mind* is based on denial of the existence of God, and denial of the *authority* of any moral law," goes on to say:

> "One officer despairingly remarked to me: 'In Russia now there is no God, no law, no property, no money, no food—only FREEDOM. . . . And it is this new and wonderful *equality of man*, which by means of torture, outrage and assassinations, proclaims *the freedom of mind* and body to the devastated Russian nation.' "

These are matters which call for the most serious consideration on the part of the people of God who have to face the peculiar dangers of these "perilous times."

III

"THE TIME THAT THE HOUSE OF GOD WAS IN SHILOH"
(Judg. 18:31)

IT should be carefully noted that what the Israelites were doing, as illustrated by the story of Micah and the Levite, was just what God had expressly commanded them *not* to do. He had strictly commanded them by Moses, when instructing them concerning the great subject of *worship*, saying: "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, *every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.*" (Deut. 12:8). Hence the significance of the words with which Micah's religious doings are introduced: "In those days there was no king in Israel; but *every man* did that which was *right in his own eyes*" (Judg. 17:6). In a word, the order of things which God had established in Israel was turned upside down. The consequences have been recorded for us, and we should give earnest heed thereto.

Micah's mother, who was old enough to have a grown grandson (see verse 5), was a religious as well as a thrifty woman. She had accumulated the large amount of eleven hundred shekels of silver with the pious intention of

making therewith a graven image and a molten image. The deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart are strikingly revealed in her conduct, which shows that men will do *in the name of the Lord* the very things which *He* has most strongly *forbidden.* For when Micah confessed to having stolen the money (being evidently fearful of his mother's curse, though having no fear of God) and restored it to her, she said: "Blessed be thou *of the Lord,* my son." And further she said: "I had wholly dedicated the silver *unto the Lord* from my hand for my son to make a molten image and a graven image." And in like manner, in our day, the name of the Lord is used to sanction a variety of religious doings that are directly contrary to His revealed will.

Thereupon the images were made and Micah further provided "an house of gods," and also supplied himself with certain religious paraphernalia—"an ephod and teraphim"—according to his own desires; and not only so, but he "consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest" (verse 5). And then follows the deeply significant comment which we have already quoted several times: "In those days there was no king in Israel," etc.

We shall do well if we permit this incident to teach us what are some of the deep-seated tendencies in the heart of man, tendencies which impel him, *unless wholly submissive to the will*

of God and instructed therein, to provide means of his own devising—things that are "right in his own eyes"—for the expression of his religious sentiments and the satisfaction of his own religious yearnings. Micah is but a typical *man;* and we have only to cast our eye upon the bewildering variety of the religious doings of Christendom, from the gorgeous and complex ritual of Rome, with its multiplicity of graven images, vestments, imposing ceremonies and other pagan devices, to the rigid simplicity of some of the extreme protestant sects, to see the full development of religious independency. Through all this tangle of endless complexity and confusion, which goes to make up that synthesis of all abominations—"Babylon the Great," or modern Christendom—*one definite principle prevails,* namely, that, in religious matters, the individual man is perfectly free to do "that which is right in his own eyes." It scarcely enters into the mind of the modern man that *God* has anything to say about the matter, or that His Word is to be consulted and obeyed. By the many professing "Christians," the Word of God is simply ignored (where it is not presumptuously set aside as a mere collection of human writings); and even for the few who hold the full inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, there are not lacking leaders—able and scholarly men,— who boldly proclaim "freedom of conscience" in matters

pertaining to the church of God, teaching that "grace" makes God's people free to please themselves, and that obedience to the commands of Christ is "legality."

It is also noticeable in Micah's conduct, as in that of the modern man, that, while God's way and order are set aside, nevertheless, there is a disposition *to copy the things of God after a fashion,* (as in the case of the *ephod,* and in the act of *consecrating* the one who was to officiate as *priest*). Thus we have the astounding mixture of things divine and things heathenish—an *ephod* and teraphim, a *priest* consecrated *to the Lord* and yet officiating in a "house of gods" before a *graven image* and a *molten image;* and to crown the whole iniquity, all this was done *in the Name of the Lord.*

In like manner, modern systems of religion seek to justify the things that are right in their own eyes by citing (for example) things which pertained to the worship that God appointed to the Jews, ignoring the fact that those things were but "shadows of things to come," and that they have been all set aside by the express decree of the Lord in the New Testament Scriptures.

According to the foundation principle of democracy, after which Micah acted, and which the modern man holds as almost sacred, it is within the "rights" of each individual to set up his own ecclesiastical establishment, and to

consecrate his own priest. For assuredly one man has precisely the same "right" to do this as his neighbor, or as any number of men who may see fit to combine and act as one company, thus forming a distinct "church." For it is quite obvious that a company of men banded together, however numerous they may be, has no more "rights" in this regard than the several *individuals* composing the company. Some in acting upon this principle, would go to the length of starting a full-blown sect, with its special name, its constitution, officials, clergy, etc. Others, less venturesome (or it may be unwilling to depart *so conspicuously* from the commands of Scripture) would start only a "Tabernacle," or "Mission." But the difference is one of degree only, not in *kind*. For in each case the principle acted upon is that of doing what is right *in one's own eyes*.

In this connection it is to be carefully noted that there is a lesson here even for that little remnant of God's people which, in this day of confusion and departure from His ways, have gone forth unto Him, without the camp, to the place of separation unto His Name alone. For none are safe, even in that place of reproach, from the subtle and powerful influence of this all-pervading principle of independency. It is of the deepest significance that, at the very end of the long and instructive account of Micah's "Tabernacle," and of how it ultimately grew

from its small beginning to be the religion of a whole tribe, is found the quiet comment that "*all the time*" (i. e., all the time that these things were happening) "the *House of God was in Shiloh*" (Judg. 18:31). God's people may (and alas! they often do) lose sight of "the House of God"; but *He never does.* And moreover, His people can always find it *if they will.* To this point we will return; but it is appropriate here to warn those who are separated to the Name of the Lord that every "house" which has its origin in the will of *men* —though they be truly converted men and though they profess separation from religious sects and denominations—exists to the confusion of the saints and to the injury of "the House of God." We are *bound,* therefore, in such times as these, to inquire with the utmost diligence concerning "the House of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), and to avoid *all* places of merely *human* origin, however they may be designated.

Shiloh (which means *His peace,* or *Peacebringer*) is first mentioned in Jacob's grand prophecy, where it is applied evidently to Christ: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come; and *unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*" (Gen. 49:10). This is the only occurrence of the word in that

precise form. It evidently carries with it the suggestion of Christ, the Peace-Bringer, making Himself the gathering center for the Israel of God; and it suggests also their peace and security with Him in the midst.

In a slightly different form the word is used of *the place* which the Lord first appointed for the gathering of His people in Palestine. Through Jeremiah He spake of it, long afterward, as "My place which was *in Shiloh, where I set My Name at the first*" (Jer. 7:12).

In the book of Joshua we have this record: "And the *whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh,* and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there" (Josh. 18:1). There were no sects or divisions then. Hence those were days of peace and prosperity, as will always be the portion of God's people when they are mindful of the place which He chooses "to put His Name there." For we read, "And the land was subdued before them."

It is very significant that the place Shiloh, where the House of God remained until the time of David, was *in the midst of the land,* at about the geographical center between north and south, and east and west; so that "all Israel" were congregated around it. But the Danites set up their "place of worship" in the far northwest corner of the land, thus illustrating the tendency in the heart of man to depart, in

this important matter, as far from God's appointed way as it is possible to go without abandoning the ground of profession altogether.

In tracing the history of Micah we see a decided progress in the development of the religious establishment of which he was the founder. For in course of time a young man who was a Levite passed that way. This Levite was seeking a lodging place, and he came with that object in mind to Micah's house.

This is a very instructive event. The Levites occupied a peculiar and most honorable position in Israel. They had been specially set apart for the service of the Lord. (See Numb. 3:5-13; 8:5-26, etc.) Moreover, God had appointed special cities for their inheritance, and had made special and most generous provision for their support. The best of all the land and its increase was theirs by God's own gift (Numb. 18:20-24; 35:1-8; Deut. 18:1-8, etc.). Hence, it is a striking illustration of the evil conditions then prevailing that a servant of the Lord should be seen wandering about seeking a place to sojourn and an opportunity to pick up a living. The conditions, therefore, were ripe for just such an arrangement as was entered into between this young Levite and Micah. The latter was not slow to recognize the advantage of having a *real servant of the Lord* to occupy the post of "parish priest," so to speak, or local "clergyman" over his house of gods. And it

is even so, at the present time, that real servants of the Lord, men whom He has set apart and qualified by spiritual gifts for *His* service, may find (if they seek them) opportunities, by private agreement with a man or a committee, to assume charge of a "church," or "chapel," or "tabernacle," or "mission," or other ecclesiastical establishment, of which there are many varieties in the present day. Such things are not only common; but they are even regarded as quite in order. It is merely a question of both parties being satisfied as to *the terms of employment.* And often the bargain is struck after "prayers for guidance" as if God could be entreated to guide contrary to His revealed will in matters pertaining to His own service.

In the case we are studying, an agreement was quickly reached, as it is written:

> "And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a *father* and a *priest,* and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man" (Judg. 17: 9-11).

This inspired account of the arrangement whereby the services of the Levite were secured and his compensation stipulated is quite in ac-

cordance with the usual modern practice. And since both parties were "content," who can raise any objection to the transaction? Then follows naturally the ceremony of installation; for the record continues:

> "And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became *his* priest, and was in the house of Micah" (ver. 12).

Here we see again God's ceremony of *consecration,* which had been appointed for *His* priests, copied by a man in setting up a priest of his own. And it appears that Micah regarded this arrangement with pious satisfaction. "Then said Micah, Now know I that *the Lord will do me good,* seeing I have a *Levite* to *my* priest." And doubtless similar arrangements in our own days are regarded as of the Lord, and "blessing" is assuredly counted upon.

The young Levite understood perfectly what his position was and seemed to be quite unconscious of the wrong of it. For when asked what he was doing there he unblushingly replied: "Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath *hired me,* and I am *his* priest" (18:4).

It is sad indeed to see a true servant of the Lord in a position so humiliating, and sadder still to find him without consciousness of his degradation. It may have been with him, as doubtless is the case with many in our day, that

he was simply carried along unthinkingly by the strong tides of prevailing custom; and it may also have been that, in the existing confusion and disorder, the support he *should have received* from the offerings of God's people was withheld from him. But, whatever be the reason, he missed his way. When contemplating such serious departures of the people and servants of the Lord from His appointed ways, we can find comfort in the fact that He, Who knoweth all hearts, and Who alone has authority to judge His servants, is able to have compassion on the ignorant and them that are out of the way. He will, moreover, make all proper allowances; so we merely note the facts and their significance for ourselves and refrain from passing judgment on others.

We further note, as an instructive feature of this incident, that the Levite evidently failed to point out to the man, Micah, as he should have done, that his religious doings were altogether contrary to the Word of God. How could it have been otherwise; for when a servant of the Lord enters into an arrangement of that sort, or when he gives countenance to it in any way, he thereby seals his own lips, making it impossible for himself "to declare *all* the counsel of God." The writer of these pages has learned that fact by experience. For when, in the early days of his service, he used to go from time to time to preach in some "church," or "taber-

nacle" organized and conducted according to the will of man, he found that he could declare the truth of God *only up to a certain point.* The words of the Apostle Paul came to him with overwhelming force in this connection. That pattern servant could say, when his ministry was drawing to a close: "Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am *pure from the blood of all men.* For I have not shunned to declare unto you *all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:26, 27). The writer of these pages could not say that; for he had repeatedly accepted invitations to preach in places where the unwritten laws of hospitality—indeed, where his very acceptance of the invitation—made it impossible to declare *all* the counsel of God. And he became painfully aware of the fact that the very truth which he was constrained to suppress *was just what the people who congregate in those places need,* in order to deliver them from a wrong position, and from grave danger. For this, as for many other faults and failures, he hopes to obtain mercy. Would that all of God's "Levites," in these "perilous times" were awake to the solemn fact that the suppression by them of part of the counsel of God may mean *"the blood"* of some of their hearers who are ignorant of the dangers to which they are exposed in these last days.

But things were not to go so well with Micah's religious enterprise as he had fondly

hoped. A further development was inevitable because it was the natural product of democratic principles. A band of prowling and adventurous Danites chanced to pass that way, and these lawless men cast an envious eye upon Micah's religious paraphernalia, and particularly upon his "priest." And then, of course, seeing that they had superior inducements to offer to the latter, they had no difficulty in persuading him to enter upon what would be called nowadays "a larger sphere of usefulness." For when these men proceeded to appropriate Micah's images, ephod, and teraphim, and the Levite asked "What do ye?" they said to him: "Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to *us* a father and a priest. Is it better *for thee* to be a priest unto the house of *one man,* or that thou be a priest unto a *tribe and a family in Israel?*"

Such arguments are usually convincing; and in that case, whatever show of reluctance the young Levite may have made for the sake of appearances, the fact was that he welcomed the prospect of promotion in his *heart;* for it is written: "And the priest's *heart* was glad, and he took the ephod and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people" (18:20).

The words in which the record of this instructive incident closes, add much to the impressiveness of its lessons:

> "And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Moses,* he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land" (about eight hundred years). "And they set up Micah's graven image which he made, *all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh*" (18:30, 31).

Up to this point in the narrative the name and family of the young Levite had been withheld. But now the fact comes out, as a startling climax to the disgraceful story that it was none other than *Moses' own grandson* who became, thus, as it were, the head and founder of a religious sect and of a spurious hierarchy, which lasted *as long as the nation itself*. Surely, if the grandson of the very man by whom the law of God concerning His house was given could thus become the founder of an idol-worshiping sect, thereby destroying the unity of God's people and corrupting His ways, we need not be surprised that good men, in later days, should have become leaders in similar enterprises.

And a further thought is suggested by the facts recorded in the verses last quoted. After a lapse of centuries, the Danites might have boasted, and probably did, of the antiquity of their sect, and might have pointed proudly to

*So it should read, as in the Revised Version, and not "Manassah," as in the A. V.

the fact that it was founded by so illustrious a personage as the grandson of Moses. For it is quite a common idea in modern religious circles that lapse of time sanctifies an act which would be wrong if done *now*. There are existing denominations of prominence and high standing in the world to-day, that claim veneration merely because of their antiquity, and justify their existence on that ground alone. It is one of the curiosities of the human heart and mind that departures from the ways of God, however gross and however palpable they may be, will find ready acceptance and respect when they can be traced back to a time in the early Christian centuries, or to some one of the so-called (and *mis*-called) "Christian fathers."

IV

"FROM THE COUNTRY OF MOAB"
(Ruth 1: 6)

LET us now turn from a background so dark and depressing as that found in the latter part of Judges, to the bright picture presented by the short book of Ruth. It is a welcome change, and one that is most refreshing to the spirit. The perusal of the book of Judges would naturally impress upon our minds the thought that Israel was *wholly* given over to lawlessness and moral corruption, and that the true knowledge of the Lord had utterly perished out of the land. Indeed, it would almost justify the conclusion that things had steadily gone from bad to worse until the case was beyond remedy.

It is a relief, therefore, to find that, even "in the days when the judges ruled," there was at least *one* company of true Israelites, such as described in the second chapter of Ruth (and there may have been other like companies), among whom the Name of the Lord was held in reverence, and who were going on peacefully and industriously together in happy fellowship. The discovery of such a "congregation of the Lord" would be a great delight even apart from all that

it signified in its relations to the working out of God's great plan of the ages. But there is one little circumstance, easily overlooked, which, when first noted by the present writer, quite transformed his estimate of the book of Ruth, and awakened an interest in it which he had not known before.

The point referred to, when duly noted, shows that we have in this short book, with its artless recital of incidents almost commonplace in character, a *vital connecting link* between the old disgraceful order of things existing in the days when the judges ruled, and the new order by which God purposed to supersede it. This important feature of the subject was lighted up in the writer's mind when his "hap happened" (see Ruth 2: 3, marg.) to notice the striking contrast between the last words of the book of Judges and the last word in the book of Ruth. (The reader may, perhaps, by noting this contrast himself, before reading further, be able to share the pleasure that this circumstance gave to the writer when he first observed it.) For, whereas the gloomy book of Judges ends with the words, "no king in Israel," a fact which accounted for the wickedness and corruption abounding in those days, the book of Ruth ends with the significant word "*David.*" It leads us by a path of pleasantness (Naomi means "pleasantness,") from a state of lawlessness, corruption and decay of authority, to the birth of that

man who was to be God's chosen King—even to David (meaning the *beloved*), the man after God's own heart, who was to save the people from their enemies, who was to rule over Israel in the fear of God, and who, best of all, was to prepare for the building of the House of God at Jerusalem.

We see at once that the book of Ruth was written and placed where we find it in our Bibles for the express purpose of showing that even while iniquity and corruption were abounding and spreading without check or hindrance, *God was working* (and working in such a way as to defy detection on man's part) in order to bring forth in due time His own remedy.

We doubt not the simple fact to which we have here called the reader's attention will invest the book of Ruth for him (as it did for the writer) with a new interest. For, though it is precious indeed to see the grace of God manifested in taking up the abhorred Moabitess (daughter of a people upon whom rested the condemnation of the law "forever"—Deut. 23:3), it is a matter of still greater interest to perceive that, in manifesting His grace to that particular "stranger," God was at the same time *taking an important step in the accomplishment of His "eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Eph. 3:11). No doubt it was a mercy to those directly concerned that God willed to build up again the house of Elimelech, which had

been virtually blotted out of existence; but it is a matter which directly concerns *all the hosts of the redeemed of all the ages* that God was using that "stranger" to build up the line along which the Redeemer Himself was to come.

Furthermore, as the story of Ruth the Stranger is unfolded in these simple pages, it leads into the truth of *Redemption* in a manner and with a fulness of illustration not found elsewhere in the Word of God. This will be seen when we come to explore the rich contents of chapters 3 and 4. For the book continues to grow in interest and in the value of the spiritual lessons it imparts, to the very end. There is no slackening of the interest, no anti-climax in the book of Ruth.

This book of Ruth, therefore, is not a digression, as might appear to some; and we have already said enough to explain clearly why God turned aside as it were from the march of events in Israel, to follow the fortunes, or rather the misfortunes, of an obscure and poverty-stricken family, hailing from a village which, even in much later times, was spoken of as "little among the thousands of Judah" (Mic. 5:2). Though no man could possibly have dreamed of such a thing, nevertheless *the line of God's highest purpose*—not merely the line of the royal house of Israel, but that of the coming of the Redeemer Himself—was connected with that poor family, soon to reach, through further ca-

lamities, the very point of extinction. And the events which befell the house of Elimelech, its descent into Moab, its connection by a wrongful marriage with the daughter of a detested and accursed people, the death of all the males, and the final return "from the country of Moab" of what remained—two destitute and childless widows, one of them past the hope of children—were just so many links in the chain of events (not to speak of others which will be noticed later on) by which that wondrous purpose of God was to be fulfilled! The contemplation of such facts as these should fill our hearts with wonder, love and praise.

We must needs look long and carefully ere we find any circumstance more amazing, and more illustrative of the marvellous ways of God, than that there should come "from the country of Moab," and in the person of a destitute daughter of that justly abhorred people, an instrument which God would use to build up, and in a time of special crisis, the line of Christ, which was seemingly cut off.

Having this fact in mind, we shall follow with closer attention than we might otherwise bestow thereupon, the incidents recorded for us in this little book. And it would seem that even the names of the persons mentioned in it, are of more than usual significance. Our attention is pointedly drawn to the meaning of Naomi—(1:20 marg.). And the name of the kinsman,

Boaz, also attracts attention because of its identity with that of one of the two conspicuous pillars which Solomon reared up before the Temple, which name signifies "In it" (or him) "is strength" (1 Chron. 3:17).

This prompts us to look at the meaning of the other names, and there is profit in so doing. Elimelech means "God is my king." Thus the leading character, at the beginning of the story, had the *name,* or profession of owning God as his King. To what extent his own personal life may have corresponded to the name he bore, we are not informed. But however that may have been, his name was a witness against the principle obtaining at that time—"no king in Israel;"—and it appears that Elimelech did that which was right in his own eyes in the matter of forsaking his own inheritance, and of departing from God's land altogether, with the object of mending his fortunes in what was the last place on earth where an Israelite should have been found.

By contrast with *Elimelech,* whose name is the first in the book, we have as the last name, *David,* the man by whom God's kingly rule was to be established in Israel, and of whom was to come the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Elimelech's departure, because of the famine that was in the land, from the inheritance where God had placed him, is the more significant because his privilege was to belong to Bethlehem,

which means *the house of bread,* in Ephrata, which means *fruitfulness.* These meanings give point, also, to later happenings in the story.

Elimelech's two sons also bore the highly significant names of Mahlon (i. e., *wasting*) and Chilion (i. e., *consumption*).

The name Ruth is most divinely appropriate and expressive; for it means *Satisfied.* How very fitting this name is to one who not only "found grace" when she came to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel, but found *satisfaction* also in becoming the happy wife of her kinsman-redeemer, and in securing what is *far greater,* that high honor which every woman of Israel ardently desired, namely, the honor of being one of the mothers of the Christ! Our story finds Ruth in the lowest place, as it were, in the world; but it leaves her in the place of highest honor. For there was no more exalted, or more honorable position in the world, than that to which Ruth was raised by her marriage with Boaz.

Does not this marvellous change in Ruth's standing and prospects furnish a clear and a beautiful illustration of what the grace of God does for every despised "stranger to the covenants of promise" (that is to say, every Gentile), who now trusts Him on hearing "the Gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ, Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh?" This spiritual lesson from Ruth's

experience has been often pointed out; but the pardoned and "satisfied" sinner finds continual delight in it.

Ruth's career furnishes also a striking illustration of the prophecy which came from the lips of that other remarkable woman, who figures prominently at the opening of the next book of the Bible, 1 Samuel. For it is worthy of special comment that the beginnings of God's intervention for establishing a new order of things in Israel, are connected with *two women,* Ruth and Hannah. Both were hopeless of offspring, the one because she was a widow, the other because, though a wife, she was barren. Yet God, in taking up these "weak" and "despised" things as His instruments, acted in respect to each of them, above and beyond nature and the natural course of events, thus showing that no natural obstacle could prevent the accomplishment of His purpose. And as we consider the marvellous career of the Moabitish "stranger," who sought where she might "find grace," we can but see how that career corresponds with the words which fell from Hannah's lips when, in ascribing praises to the Lord God of Israel, she said:

"The Lord *killeth* and *maketh alive:* He bringeth down to the grave, and *bringeth up.*

"The Lord *maketh poor* and *maketh rich.* He bringeth *low* and *lifteth up.*

"He raiseth up *the poor out of the dust,* and lifteth up *the beggar from the dunghill,* to set them *among princes,* and to make them inherit *the throne of glory*.....The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto *His King,* and shall exalt the horn of *His Anointed*" (1 Sam. 2:6-10).

God's new era for Israel was to be introduced through Samuel, the prophet, and through David, whom Samuel was to make manifest to Israel; and He laid hold of these two childless women as the instruments by which His chosen servants were to come.

There is a wonderful parallel to these events in the "beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1), that is to say, in God's preliminary workings for the introduction of "the Kingdom of Heaven"—the name given to this present dispensation, wherein every believing sinner, though he come out of some spiritual "Moab," may "*find grace.*" For at the beginning of this era God raised up an instrument for Himself in the person of John the Baptist, who was the greatest of the prophets, because his mission was to announce a greater than David, and a greater Kingdom than that of Israel.

Accordingly, God here again begins His workings (and begins, also, the inspired account thereof) with *two women* who were, humanly speaking, *impossible* as instruments for His

purpose, the one, Elisabeth, because she was barren and well stricken in years, and the other, Mary, because she was a virgin.

Many interesting and profitable meditations might be found in pursuing this obviously designed parallel. But that would lead us aside from our present purpose. So we now bring this chapter to a close. Our study has led us to a view, new perhaps to some of us, of the marvellous acts of Him Who is "great in counsel and mighty in work," of God "Who *quickeneth the dead* and calleth those *things that be not* as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). He will not suffer His purpose to fail for lack of an instrument. And if none suited to His designs be found among the women of *Israel,* He can bring one up even "from the country of Moab."

V

GOOD NEWS

"HEARD IN THE COUNTRY OF MOAB"

"Then she arose to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread" (RUTH 1: 6).

THE book of Ruth begins with mention of the fact that there was a famine in the land. That famine was from God. It was one of the consequences of the bad spiritual condition of His people; but it was sent with a view to blessing in the end. God's visitations of this character are not only, nor mainly, for the purpose of punishing men for their sins, but rather with a view to their recovery through repentance and self-judgment. Man must be made to feel his own weakness and helplessness before he becomes willing to humble himself and to seek the mercy which God, "Who is rich in mercy," is always ready to bestow. This is one of the most familiar facts of human experience; yet the lesson it should teach is generally ignored.

Moreover, God often uses trials and afflictions as a means of leading the objects of His dealings into a place of blessing, or as a means

of accomplishing some important step in the carrying out of His work of the ages. In Psalm 105 we read, concerning the famine which occurred in the days of Joseph, that God sent it for a special purpose. "Moreover, He called for a famine upon the land. He brake the whole staff of bread" (Psa. 105:17). By that act He started a train of events which led to Jacob's family going down into Egypt, there, in that furnace of affliction, to be formed into a nation and there to learn God's love for them and His faithfulness to His promise, in the mighty works which He subsequently wrought for their deliverance.

So likewise in the case before us, the famine in the days of Elimelech set in motion a whole train of events which, though in outward appearance quite ordinary in character, served nevertheless to bring about a new order of things in Israel, and the consequences of which have not yet reached an end.

It is evident that Elimelech made a serious mistake in leaving the lot of his inheritance, which God had appointed to him, and in seeking to escape out of the hand of the Lord and from the rod of His wholesome discipline. Far, far better is it for the Lord's people, when His chastening hand falls upon them, to humble themselves before Him and seek *the purpose* of His visitation. The folly of the course pursued by Elimelech was quickly made manifest.

Elimelech himself was cut off, and the family thus deprived of its head.

But this sharp lesson seems to have been wholly ignored. For the next thing we read is that each of the sons took him a wife from among the daughters of Moab. This was a flagrant transgression against the Lord, Who had expressly forbidden the taking of "strange wives" by His people (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3; Ezra 9:11, 12, etc.). It was, moreover, a presumptuous attempt on the part of Mahlon and Chilion to build up their father's house by contracting marriages in defiance of the word of the Lord; but it was to no purpose, for, instead of the marriages being fruitful, both Mahlon and Chilion died, leaving no offspring. Thus Naomi was left of her two sons and her husband; and the house of Elimelech was, except for some special working of God's mighty power, *wholly blotted out.* This, to an Israelite, was an unspeakable calamity.

But it is often when things are at their very worst that God comes in and shows Himself to be indeed the "God Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." The house of Elimelech was surely among the "things which be not." Yet from out of that practically extinct house was to come, not only a king for the people of Israel, but a Saviour and Ruler for the whole world. The house of Elimelech was revived, as

it were, from a dead stock; and in this circumstance we see another link connecting together Abraham and David as the prophetic channels of the Gospel. (See Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3; 4:1, 6.)

As we lift our eyes to contemplate the far-off and world-wide consequences of the line of events which had its beginning in God's mercy to the stricken house of Elimelech, we can but return with wonder and admiration in our hearts to note the unobtrusive way in which God intervened to restore the destitute remnant of this family, preparatory to making it the instrument of His eternal purpose, and His channel of blessing to the whole world.

What has deeply impressed us in meditating upon this portion of Scripture is the remarkable *turning-point* in the family history of Naomi—the precise point at which things changed for the better and continued to improve until a state of blessing, beyond all their power to ask or think or imagine, was reached. That point was *what they heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had done.*

This is a wonderful illustration of the Gospel—that is to say, the "good news" which tells of what the Lord has done for those who deserve only His condemnation and wrath; and a wonderful illustration also of the *effect* of the Gospel on all who hear it with "the hearing of faith."

It was a very simple gospel that reached Naomi's ears in the country of Moab; and it was a message quite easy to understand. God's Gospel is simplicity itself, and is intended for such as *be* simple. Those who are responsible to tell it out to perishing men should be, like Paul, studious to avoid making use of "the words which man's wisdom teacheth." For the intended effect of the Gospel does not depend on the eloquence of the preacher or on his command of "enticing words of man's wisdom"; but solely *on the good news he publishes.* Hence, by resorting to "wisdom of words," the messenger of the Gospel instead of furthering the *work* of the Gospel, may make the cross of Christ of none effect (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:13).

What Naomi heard, and what reached her heart and became the pivot upon which her own fortunes were reversed, and the whole future history of the world was to be turned, was simply that "the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread." Bread is a common figure for *life;* and hence, in this case, it serves to remind us of Him Who became the Bread of life, and Who said of Himself, "My Father *giveth* you the true Bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and *giveth life* to the world....I am that Bread of life" (John 6:32, 33, 48).

Those destitute ones heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited His people in

giving them bread. The eternal life that is shared by all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ is God's "*free-gift.*" None is good enough to deserve it or rich enough to buy it. Those only receive it and possess it, who take it as the gift of God's *grace.* For God's great plan in the saving of perishing men is to *give everything freely,* that the result may be "to the praise of the glory of His *grace*" (Eph. 1:6). And the grace which saves the believing sinner is without bounds or limits; for God has displayed it in giving His only-begotten Son, His Well-beloved, to die for sinners. This is God's "unspeakable Gift," received to their eternal blessedness by all who believe the Gospel.

But there is, in the heart of man—corrupted as it is by sin—not only an obstinate reluctance to admit his hopelessness as a guilty sinner, and his utter helplessness to do anything for his own recovery; but there is, also, a rooted aversion to being saved by *grace alone.* Man wishes (when he becomes concerned at all as to his personal salvation) to be saved on the ground that he is earnest and sincere in his efforts to do right, or is regular in the performance of his "religious duties," or is kind and charitable to the poor, or is no worse than his neighbors; but *not on the ground that he is guilty and hopelessly lost.* Yet that is the *only* ground upon which God's salvation is offered to men; though the Devil, who is the great deceiver and

who knows the deceitfulness of the human heart, has plentifully stocked the world with systems of religion that hold out to perishing sinners the delusion of a *possible* salvation on the ground—wholly or in part—of their own works. And men are thus deceived by the millions to their own eternal destruction, notwithstanding that God has plainly said that salvation is "not of works lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8).

The words, "the Lord has *visited* His people," bring to mind the prophecy of Zacharias, who spoke of the then imminent coming of Christ as Saviour, saying: "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath *visited us,* to *give* light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lu. 1:78, 79).

The "way of peace," of which Zacharias prophesied was soon to be opened by Christ's death on the cross; and that promised "light" was soon to burst upon the world in His resurrection from the dead. As was written afterwards: "The darkness is past, and the true Light now shineth" (1 John 2:8).

Naomi's faith in the word that reached her in the country of Moab was quickly shown by her *works.* And here we can clearly distinguish between works done to secure favor from God ("works of law") and works which spring from

believing what God has said ("works of faith"). Without works of the *latter* sort, faith is *dead* (James 2:17); that is to say, it is not *faith* at all. For the effect upon Naomi of hearing the simple Gospel of bread in Judah was that "she *arose* that she might *return* from the country of Moab. Wherefore she *went forth* out of the place where she was" (verses 6, 7). Thus it was in the case of the prodigal son, whose condition began to undergo a complete change from the moment when he said: "I will *arise* and *go* unto my father." This is the way God would have every sinner act upon hearing the Gospel of His grace—the free-gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. He wills that they should *repent,* or *turn again* to Him, and "come," believing the message and trusting Christ the Lord.

Naomi set forth with such energy of faith that she carried along her two daughters-in-law with her. But one cannot go far on the faith of another, notwithstanding that the example of faith has its proper influence. A man cannot go to heaven nor receive forgiveness because he had believing parents. Salvation is strictly a personal and an *individual* matter. Each one stands condemned for his own sins and each one must receive Christ by his own faith for his own salvation. God is a "God of *truth,*" that is to say, of *reality;* and He will *have* reality. A mere profession of Christianity,

especially if accompanied by acts of piety and attention to religious observances, may deceive men. But God knoweth the hearts; and frequently He brings in a test which shows whether the profession be real or not.

Both Orpah and Ruth accompanied Naomi when she set forth on her return to the land of Judah, and to all *appearances* the one was just as sincere and settled in her purpose to make this great change of circumstances as the other. But what a difference there was at heart! Orpah illustrates the lamentable case of many who have a certain interest in divine things, and who respond in a certain measure to their attractive power. For there are many who manifest for a time a concern about eternal things, and who, moreover, have the benefit of companionship with those who are true disciples and pilgrims journeying towards a better country, that is, an heavenly. The former, when tested, draw back. When the case is put plainly before them and they are called upon to count the cost, they show that they belong to this world, that they have not been born again, that there has been no work of God in their hearts, and that they are not prepared to renounce the world and its attractions.

Those who *truly believe* God's gospel, with its exceeding great and precious promises, are controlled in their course of life by "things not seen," but which they accept as true on the

evidence of God's Word. It is *faith alone* that has made them strangers and pilgrims on earth. And it is *faith alone,* not compulsion, that *keeps their feet* in the path which leads through and *out of* this present evil world. For "truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned" (Heb. 11: 13-16).

To both Ruth and Orpah the same opportunity was given to return to that country where all their kinsfolk, friends, interests and associations were. And thus the difference between them was made manifest. Orpah was "mindful of that country." Her mind was *full* of the things of the land of Moab. Judah did not appeal to her. She was not under the influence of "things not seen," and hence she turned back "to her people and her gods."

As we meditate on the exceedingly simple account before us of these events (which seemingly were of but slight importance, yet involved issues of the greatest moment) we must be impressed by the fact that outwardly, as regards the conduct of these two women, and also (so far as appears) as regards their respective characters and dispositions, there was no superiority in Ruth over Orpah. Both were amiable and affectionate. When Naomi reminded them of their distressing circumstances they *both* lifted up their voice and wept; and Naomi testified of Orpah, equally with Ruth,

that she had dealt kindly with her dead son and with herself (verses 8, 9). And when Naomi continued with kindly persistence to put the facts of the case plainly before them, they both "lifted up their voice and wept again." Moreover, it is recorded that "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law"—(verse 14)—kissed her, and *went back.*

The Word of God makes it very plain that a sweet and lovable disposition, a tender and affectionate heart, faithfulness in one's obligations, and the like, though excellent things in their way, *will not take one to heaven. Faith* is what makes all the difference between the saved and the lost. Those who, on hearing the Word of the Gospel, believe and *act* upon it (and if they really *believe* they will surely act upon it) are accepted of God without regard at all to their disposition or their previous manner of life; whereas they that "obey not the Gospel," refusing its promises, are rejected and "condemned already because they have not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

Naomi dealt fairly and truthfully with her daughters-in-law, showing them that she could not set before them any inducement which the natural heart would desire, and particularly that she could offer them no hope regarding the matter which, in their circumstances, would be one of the utmost importance to them both. In

like manner, the Word of God does not promise worldly advantages, but on the contrary lets it be plainly known that *in the world* they who follow Christ will have tribulation, and that all who will to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Nevertheless, the life of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is the *only life that is worth living in this world.* The writer of these pages wishes to declare with the utmost emphasis that—without any regard whatever to eternal gains and prospects for the life that is to be—he has been *a gainer immeasurably* during the sixteen years since he turned to the Lord; and that he would not for any consideration, even if it involved no loss hereafter, go back again to that country from whence he came out, and to that manner of life from which, through the mercy of God and as the result of the cross of Christ, he has been separated.

So Orpah returned to her people and to her gods; and we lose sight of her. What a tragedy lies under that simple statement! And alas! how many amiable, tender-hearted and affectionate "Orpahs" there are among our friends and kindred and acquaintance!

VI

RUTH'S CHOICE

"Ruth clave unto her."

BUT the very same matters which caused Orpah to turn back again served but to bring out the fact that there was a different spirit in Ruth. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law" *and departed*; "but Ruth *clave unto her.*" And now the question is whether the latter's steadfastness will withstand the additional pressure of Orpah's example. Naomi urges this as a further reason why Ruth, too, should turn back again. "And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law."

Naomi's persistence, however, served only to make manifest the full strength of Ruth's purpose. In an utterance that is hard to match (even in the Bible itself) for quiet dignity and force, though expressed in words of the utmost simplicity, Ruth declares her complete abandonment of her former life and home-surroundings, with all the inducements and possible advantages it had to offer, and her irrevocable committal of herself to all the unknown and unimaginable consequences of uniting her destiny to that of Naomi:

"And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

It is impossible not to admire this utterance, and the nobility of character evinced by it. And the greater must be our admiration because we would not look for such qualities as are here manifested in one belonging to a people so morally degraded as the Moabites. But it must be remembered that we have in Ruth one who was manifestly a chosen vessel prepared by the Lord for a special use; and, with that fact in view, we will realize that our admiration is due, not to the human vessel, but to the One Who fashioned it for His own purposes, and Who, at the proper time, took it up for the accomplishment thereof.

It is God Who works in those whom He choses, both *to will* and *to do* of His own good pleasure. Ruth was a Gentile, having no standing under the law, but being wholly an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenants of promise. But God is the God "of the Gentiles also"; and this is one of the instances in which He was pleased to give an indication of the coming day of grace, in

which He would "make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" (Rom. 3:29; 9:23, 24).

Ruth, then, was a vessel of mercy which God had afore prepared unto glory; and the noble qualities manifested in her are but the ornaments of character with which He was pleased to endow her. And herein is His power as well as His grace displayed toward all who come, as Ruth did, to trust under His wings (Ruth 2:12). The end of all His dealings with them, who are "the called according to His purpose," is that they should be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:28, 29). Therefore, when we see any traits that provoke our admiration in the members of our sinful race, whom God has taken up in His sovereign grace, let them but serve to remind us of Him in Whom all excellence and perfection is seen; and let us, who "belong to Christ" rejoice in that we are God's workmanship, and are being changed "into the same image from glory to glory."

But this knowledge of God's "purpose," which He has been pleased to impart to those who are embraced by it, is intended to arouse their interest and to stimulate their coöperation in the accomplishment of that purpose. Bearing this in mind, we would do well to notice particularly that what is made conspicuous in

the inspired description of Ruth is her *humility*, her child-like docility, and her lowliness of mind. Many Scriptures testify that God "giveth grace to the humble"; and therefore we are exhorted to humble ourselves under His mighty hand (James 4:6, 10; 1 Pet. 5: 5, 6). When God deals with His people (sometimes using, if need be, very severe measures), it is that He might do them good at their latter end (Deut. 8:16). It was when Ruth took the lowly place that she "found grace"; and this will ever be the experience of those who follow her example.

Great issues depended upon the choice which that heathen woman was about to make; so that the incident may well serve to teach us the importance of deciding aright, even in matters seemingly of little moment. Certain decisions in the careers of great men are sometimes referred to as affecting the history of nations and of the world. Cæsar's decision to cross the Rubicon, and the decision of Columbus to continue his western voyage another day, are instances which led to consequences affecting the history of mankind. But, in comparison with the matters which hinged upon the choice of Ruth the Moabitess, the actions of great discoverers and conquerors are of relatively little importance. Hence, in the light of after events, the decision of Ruth is invested with peculiar interest.

Ruth's reply to Naomi is remarkable also for the *completeness* with which she committed herself to the step she was about to take. On examining it in detail, we find it consists of six items, which, taken together, go as far as Ruth's outlook into the future could reach.

"Whither Thou Goest I Will Go." Life presents, at every point, many paths that might be taken; and each one of us would naturally wish to reserve to himself the most complete freedom of choice. But Ruth here deliberately renounces *all* freedom of choice, and commits herself to a path which may lead she knows not whither, and whose course from beginning to end is to be determined *by another*.

Such is the confidence that Christ invites in Himself, and which all who acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour should give Him, as fully and unreservedly as Ruth committed herself to Naomi. It is indeed a "narrow way," but it is "the path of life"; it is the path of safety; it is the path of fruitful service; it is "the path that shines more and more unto the perfect day," and, above all, it is the path in which communion with Himself is known and enjoyed. How blessed to have one's path chosen by Him Who alone can guide aright through this wilderness—by the Good Shepherd Who, "when He putteth forth His own sheep, goeth before them."

"And Where Thou Lodgest I Will Lodge." Ruth makes no stipulations as to where or of what sort the lodging-place should be. The desire that filled her breast was to be always in company with the one to whom she committed herself. And to this she held fast, even after becoming a welcome inmate of Boaz's house and making the acquaintance of those suited by age to be her companions. For even "unto the end of the barley harvest and of the wheat harvest" she "dwelt with her mother-in-law" (2:23).

To dwell with Christ, what a prospect! The question on the lips of the two who first turned to follow Him was: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" And His gracious reply is recorded for our encouragement, if we are of those who have turned from our own way to follow Him: "Come and see" (John 1:38, 39). It is a real experience, and a real companionship to which He invites His disciples. For He has said: "If a man"—it matters not what sort of man—"love me, he will *keep My words*: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and *make Our abode with him*" (John 14:23). This is the same One Who inhabiteth eternity, and Who said of old: "I dwell in the high and holy place; *with him also* that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Is. 57:15). What matters it where the place be on earth, or of what sort? "Where Jesus is, 'tis heaven there." And what is it that gives our eternal

home its blessedness? Is it the beauties and glories of the New Jerusalem which He puts before the eyes of our heart? Not so; but thus He describes it, "that *where I am*"—what matter where indeed?—"*there* ye may be also" (John 14:1, 2).

"Thy People Shall Be My People." Orpah had returned to *her* people. But Ruth now makes a decision which means *separation.* It is a word full of meaning to the people of God, for they are, of all things, a *separated people.* At least, that is God's thought for them. His very first dealing with Abraham was to separate him from his country, his kindred, and his father's house. And God could do nothing further for or with the man of his purpose until that separation was an accomplished fact.

Ruth answers well to what is required of "the queen," she who is to be the King's wife, to whom these words are spoken: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; *forget also thine own people* and thy father's house; *so* shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him" (Ps. 45:10, 11).

Ruth had hearkened, she had "considered" the matter well; she realized what it involved—even the forgetting of her own people; and she reached a decision which committed her irrevocably to a people of whom she knew nothing. "*Thy* people shall be *my* people."

This is recalled afterwards in her favor. For Boaz says approvingly: "Thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come *unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore*" (2:11).

And this is the experience (or should be) of all who receive Christ, believing on His Name. It means the severing of our associations with the people of the world (though not the family ties, which are sacred), and the unqualified and irrevocable acceptance of a people whom we *knew not heretofore.* For it is a remarkable fact concerning the children of God (and a painful fact very often for them) that "the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3:1). Yet the acceptance of Christ means, of necessity, the acceptance of *all who are Christ's,* from the least to the greatest.

We do not know what sort of testimony was borne in Moab by Elimelech and his two sons. But the events recorded concerning them do not encourage the thought that their testimony was a credit to the Lord and to His people. On that account there is all the more honor due to the testimony of Naomi. There was something in the manner of life of this woman of God which so impressed her heathen daughter-in-law that she was willing, upon her example, to accept Naomi's people, and to *make them her own.* May this lesson not be lost on us. Let us ask ourselves, do our ways and dealings with our

neighbors commend the One to Whom we are professedly separated? Do we, in the common affairs of our everyday lives, "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour?" Is our example such that some of those around us would, *by what they see in us,* be willing to say "*thy* people shall be *my* people?" Let us bear in mind that they are watching us closely from every quarter, for we are "living epistles known and read of all men," "a city set on a hill." And let us bear in mind that, if we are not living "unto Him," if we are not showing forth in our lives the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, then we are both bringing dishonor upon that worthy Name, and are also putting a stumbling-block in the way of some who might otherwise be seeking and finding peace with God through Him.

"And Thy God, My God." This was probably the hardest thing of all for Ruth to say. The natural man clings with the utmost tenacity to his religion. It matters not what sort of religion it may be, however fantastical, gross, or unreasonable. The fact that it is *his* religion is what gives it value in his own eyes; and hence he will resent any slight or reflection upon it. He will fight for it, and die for it. All human history bears witness to this.

The powerful hold which "religion" has upon the heart of men is strikingly declared in

the words of the Lord through Jeremiah: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods?" (Jer. 2:11). Such a thing as a national change of religion was unknown then, if it has ever happened since. In calling attention to this fact of human nature and human history, we would say that Christianity is not a "religion." The world regards it as such, and classifies it as one of "the great religions *of the world.*" But the Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to found a system of religion—anything but that. There are many statements in the New Testament of the objects for which He came forth from God; but founding a religion is not one of them. He came "to save sinners," "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil," to "redeem us from all iniquity that He might purify unto Himself a people for His own possession," to declare the Father's Name unto His brethren, to "save His people from their sins," to fulfill "the law and the prophets," to "destroy the works of the devil"; and to accomplish yet other results of the highest importance to God and men; *but not to introduce another system of religion into the world.* Those who receive the risen Christ as their righteousness before God and confess Him as their "Lord," are delivered out of the world and out of all its systems of religion. They are a heavenly people,

whose citizenship is in heaven, and whose "place of worship" is "within the vail."

That which men speak of as "the Christian Religion" has no real existence. What they mean by that expression is the bewildering confusion of "Christendom," with its tangle of contradictory doctrines, and its Babel of over a thousand jarring sects and lesser organizations. The nations that are called "Christian" have not really "changed their gods which are yet no gods." Men still worship everywhere the creatures of their own imaginations. But the devil, defeated in his character of roaring lion by the Lamb of God, Who, on the cross, spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2:15), has transformed himself under the guise of "an angel of light" and his ministers under that of "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14, 15). And thus we have an immense variety of religions, Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Greek-Orthodox, etc., in any one of which an unpardoned and unreconciled sinner, who is an enemy of God and a rejecter of Christ, may both enjoy religious satisfaction to his heart's content and according to his own preferences, and may also secure the worldly advantages that accrue to those who live religiously, and who are members of some religious denomination known and respected by the world.

It is a far different thing to turn one's back upon all human religions and religious organizations, to receive Christ for salvation and life, and to "go forth *unto Him* without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13).

It means much for the human heart to part with all its gods, all in which it puts its trust, and to say to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Thy God shall be my God." But to all such He sends this as His greeting in resurrection-life: "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto *My* Father, and *your* Father; and to *My* God and *your God*" (John 20:17). And they can say: "Blessed be *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,* Who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1:3).

"Where Thou Diest, Will I Die." Ruth was making a *life-long* choice. She had no thought of making merely a trial of the land of Judah and of Naomi's people and her God. She made a decision that was not to be reversed, and was taking a step never to be retraced. In that spirit we should come to Christ. "No man," He says, "having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). But Ruth gave no backward look. Her face was steadfastly set to go to the

land of Judah; though she had no conception of the riches of grace and the glorious destiny that awaited her there. Let us take this for our example, and, "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto the things that are before," let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

"Where Thou Diest, Will I Die." These words have yet another lesson for us. To know that in Christ's death *we* died, and to glory in His cross by which the world is crucified to us and *we to the world,* is truth of the weightiest character which the Scriptures reveal to us. The Apostle Paul says: "For I, through the law, died to the law. I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:19, 20, R. V.). And again: "Because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14, R. V.). "He died unto sin once"; and therefore the command to us, His people, is, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

"And There Will I Be Buried." Ruth's consecration to Naomi did not end even with death. The full expression of what was in her heart required her to speak also of a common burying place. And beyond that her thoughts could not go.

The union of the believer with Jesus Christ, his Lord and Saviour, contemplates a common burial, so to speak; and this is what baptism expresses in a figure. As it is written, "Therefore we are *buried* with Him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:4); and again, "Buried with Him in baptism" (Col. 2:12).

But to us it is given to *look beyond death and the grave* into the unending ages of eternity; and there we see "no separation" from Him to Whom we have committed ourselves. So, to the *six* items of Ruth's remarkable committal of herself, which extended *just so far as her thought could reach,* we may add a glorious SEVENTH, and say that we are:

"QUICKENED TOGETHER WITH CHRIST" (Eph. 2:5). "For if we be dead with Him we shall also live with Him" (1 Tim. 2:11). "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should *live together with Him*" (1 Thess. 5:10). It is ours to be *forever with the Lord.* All this is contemplated in the call of the Gospel; and it were well for each one of us to go over, point by point, the six steps of Ruth's consecration, making each of them our own, glorified, however, by the blessedness of the One on Whom *we* cast *ourselves* at the first; and adding the final step which contemplates Him as our satisfying and eternal portion. "For He is mine, and I am His, forever and forever."

VII

BETHLEHEM, IN THE BEGINNING OF BARLEY HARVEST.

TO the believer in Jesus Christ the story of Ruth has a special appeal when he comes to see in it an outline of *his own personal history* as a child of God. Ruth acted under the influence of *testimony* concerning "things not seen"; and she manifested her faith by her works. The effective cause of the step she took, and which led to a complete change of her position, her associations, and her prospects, was the "hearing" of the simple Gospel message of bread in Judah.

The testimony that reached her ears and heart wrought such conviction in her that she committed herself unalterably, for life and death, to that choice which it induced her to make; insomuch that neither the uncertainties of the prospect before her, nor the discouraging words of Naomi, nor the example of Orpah, availed to turn her back from her course. So when Naomi "saw that she was *steadfastly minded to go* with her, then she left speaking with her." Ruth stood the required test, and now all obstacles in her way are removed. Like Rebekah she said, *"I will go"* (Gen. 24:52).

And the history of mankind was shaped by that decision.

We have referred to Ruth's humility. We see now another admirable trait—*steadfastness.* This is a quality that Christ desires His people to show. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye *steadfast,* unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:59). It was one of the qualities that characterized the first converts to Christ; for of these it is written that "they continued *steadfastly* in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The Lord would have as followers only such as are "steadfastly minded to go." When a certain man said to Him: "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," His reply was: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." So He offers no worldly inducements or advantages to His followers; but if one be steadfastly minded to go, he will not be deterred by the lack of attractions of that sort. If it be *Christ Himself* that our heart desires, there will be no impediment in our way.

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem." No additional incidents of the journey are recorded. The important thing is that they reached the desired goal, Bethlehem, the "house of bread," the place where that is found which meets man's great need. And it is re-

corded that "all the city was moved about them." Why this stir about the arrival of two poverty-stricken, travel-stained women, whose presence could not be a benefit to the city, but very likely a charge upon it? Such an event could not be regarded as of any *earthly* importance. But it serves to remind us that there is commotion in heaven over one sinner that repents. Yes, it is even so—for "the Lord from heaven" has made it known—that there is *joy* in heaven over the return to God of one sinner, though his condition and character be such that not a city on earth would desire his presence. The City that is above is stirred by an event of which no city on earth would take notice.

So they arrived at the *right place,* and they came at a *good time,* "the beginning of barley harvest." This was the early springtime, the barley being the *first* of the grain that ripens in the spring (Ex. 9:31, 32), the "first fruits" of the earth, a period to which the Scriptures give a very special and very important spiritual significance.

In the first place, it is a time of *joy,* "the joy of harvest"; and manifestly, the one who came on the scene at the beginning of barley harvest was in good time to partake of the joy and blessings of the entire harvest.

But, in order to perceive the special significance of the beginning of barley harvest, we

must refer to "the feasts of the Lord" which the children of Israel were commanded to keep year by year, and which are described in the order of their observance in the 23d chapter of Leviticus. The first of those feasts, heading the majestic procession, is the Passover, which came always on the fourteenth day of the first month, and which typified the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the shedding of His blood as the Lamb of God for the redemption of His people and the forgiveness of their sins (1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

Each one of these feasts, ending with the feast of Tabernacles (foreshadowing the Millennium) corresponds with some particular feature of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second feast, the Passover Supper, following *immediately* upon the Passover Sacrifice, foreshadowed the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:16), indicating that the *immediate* result of His death would be a company of people (a "fellowship," or "communion") sharing together the benefits of His sacrifice.

Then comes thirdly (the resurrection-day number), the feast of "*First fruits,*" which is that in which we are specially interested at this time. The command to the people was as follows: "Then ye shall bring a sheaf of the *first-fruits of your harvest* unto the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be *ac-*

cepted for you; on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:10, 11).

This feast very definitely foreshadowed the *Resurrection* of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, as the New Testament Scriptures plainly declare, and as the feast itself clearly indicates. The Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of in the great resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15), as "the *Firstfruits* of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20); and in Rom. 11:16, also, He is spoken of as the Firstfruits.

This is full of instruction and interest. This present age, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, is likened by the Lord to a great harvest field, in which the whole world is the *field,* and the Gospel, or Word of God, is the good seed, and the harvest is the end of the age (Mat. 13:37-39). And just as the beginning of the harvest season in Palestine was marked by the feast of Firstfruits, and the waving before the Lord of a sheaf of first-ripe grain, coming up from the earth after the death of winter, so the beginning of this age was marked by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, which brought "joy," greater than "the joy of harvest" to His disciples (see Luke 24:52).

The peculiarity of this feast is that it was appointed to be observed "on the morrow after the Sabbath," in other words, *the first day of the week,* the resurrection day, which, in the year our Lord was crucified, fell on the 17th

day of the first month, three days after the Passover. That was also the day the ark rested on Mount Ararat—another type of Resurrection (Gen. 8:4).

The words, "to be accepted *for you,*" indicate what the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is to His people. For He was "delivered for our offences; and was raised again *for our justification*" (Rom. 4:25). Since it was for *our* offences He was delivered to the executioners and put to death, His resurrection is proof that He is *accepted for us.*

Furthermore, the very word "Firstfruits" means that there is *more to follow.* And the significance of this is unfolded in the Apostle Paul's great argument in 1 Corinthians 15, where he shows the connection between the Lord's own resurrection and that of His people when He comes again: "Christ the Firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (verse 23). The sheaf of firstfruits waved before the Lord not only acknowledged Him as the One Who had brought forth the living grain out of the earth, from the midst of the darkness and of the corruption of dead and decaying matter, but it also was the pledge of the full harvest to follow later. So the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ not only manifests "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward" (Eph. 1:19, 20); but it also proves the resurrection of the dead hereafter; for "if there be no resur-

rection of the dead, then is *Christ not risen"* (1 Cor. 15:13).

The application of this to all who hear and believe the Gospel is apparent. The glad message of pardoning love, with the gracious invitation to "come, for all things are ready," is sent to every part of the world, and is intended even for those who are at the lowest levels of human degradation and need. The words that save (Acts 11:14) can penetrate *everywhere;* and even those who are *cursed by the law,* as were the people of Moab, may, *through the Gospel,* become partakers of the unsearchable riches of Christ. For He, by His death, has taken away "the middle wall of partition," the law of commandments in ordinances, which shut Gentiles out from those privileges which the law conferred on the people of Israel (Eph. 2: 12-16); and now, "by means of the Gospel," all that Christ is *in resurrection* is shared equally by believing sinners, whether from among the Jews or from among the Gentiles (Eph. 3:6-9).

So we may say that every believing sinner comes to Bethlehem, the House of Bread, to share the "true Bread from heaven," and that he comes "at the *beginning of barley harvest";* for he comes to "Christ Risen From the Dead and become the Firstfruits of them that slept."

It is a most comforting thought for those who are being saved, in the last days of this long age,

that it is still "the beginning of barley harvest." For God has, as it were, *stopped the clock* at the moment of Christ's resurrection. "Times and seasons" are not counted in this age. To the prophets of old no interval of time was seen between "the *sufferings* of Christ, and the *glories* which should follow." And even to the first disciples the return of the Lord Jesus Christ was preached and promised as a thing *always imminent.* Why, then, this exceedingly long age? Is God "slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness?" (2 Pet. 3:9). Not so. The judgment has been long due. The Lord Himself said: "The prince of this world is (lit., *has been*) judged" (John 16:11). But God has been holding things *exactly as they were at the beginning of the age.* He has been holding back the judgment of the world in righteousness by that One Whom He hath ordained, for the express purpose that men everywhere might *repent* and be *saved* (Acts 17:30, 31; 2 Pet. 3:9). So we are told to count the long-suffering of our God to be, *not "slackness"* but *"Salvation"* (2 Pet. 3:15). Such it has been indeed to us, and such may it yet be to multitudes of others who are still in their sins.

It is needful to keep in mind that the Gospel, which God sent into the world, proclaimed a *Risen* Christ, in Whom men were commanded to believe and Whom they are to confess as

"Lord." The tendency, so manifest in our day in those who essay to preach the Gospel, to make little or nothing of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and what is involved in it (judgment to come being one element), was evidently foreseen. Hence, the burden of Paul's last message to Timothy is: "Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David *raised from the dead* according to *my gospel*" (2 Tim. 2:8).*

But Christ Who rose from the dead was Christ Who was crucified for sinners, thereby making atonement by the shedding of His blood on their behalf. There is no suggestion, in the Book of Ruth, of the cross. What we are permitted to view, is *the harvest-time,* the divinely chosen type of *this present dispensation,* now drawing to a close. Boaz, the type of the Kinsman-Redeemer, is seen in power and authority, as owner of the field. But nevertheless, the little story whose riches we are exploring does not lack the clue that leads us to an apt and peculiarly vivid illustration of the means whereby redemption was accomplished, and the way opened by which sinners might come, even from the country of Moab, to God's inexhaustible stores of grace. That clue is found in the words, "the beginning of barley harvest."

---

*See "The Foundation and the Seal," and "The Sign of Jonah," by P. Mauro, Hamilton Bros., 120 Tremont St., Boston. 10c. each.

In one other Scripture (and only one) those words are found; and thus the two passages are linked together.

Turning to 2 Samuel 21, we read of another "famine in the land," lasting in that case three years; and when David inquired of the Lord, he was told: "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." Now the Gibeonites had secured from Joshua a covenant of protection, as it is written, "And Joshua *made peace* with them, and made a league with them, to let them *live;* and the princes of the congregation *sware* unto them" (Josh. 9:15). It is true that the Gibeonites had resorted to deception and trickery in order to secure this covenant. Nevertheless, it was recognized as a valid covenant and binding upon the Israelites even from the days of Joshua onward for over four hundred years. Moreover, the Gibeonites had acted in the fear of the Lord; and instead of fighting against the Israelites they had sought peace with them, doing so, as they said, "because of *the Name of the Lord thy God*; for we have heard of the fame of Him, and all that He did in Egypt," etc. (Josh. 9:9). This incident of the Gibeonites is one of many examples found in the Old Testament, showing that the Lord is merciful to *all* who seek the protection of His Name.

But Saul violated this covenant, and slew those whom he was bound to protect; and thus

the land became defiled with innocent blood. "Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you, and wherewith shall I *make the atonement* that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?" (2 Sam. 21:3).

This raises the great question of "atonement" for sin, and it leads on to one of the most striking of all the object-lessons touching that vital subject, to be found in the Bible. "Wherewith shall I make the atonement?" is a question which many a heart, even among the heathen, has asked with deepest anxiety when under conviction of sin. And the conscience of man is well able to tell him that neither "silver nor gold" will make the atonement. The reply of the Gibeonites is very significant: "We will have *no silver nor gold* of the house of Saul; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord."

This is the voice of the law exacting stern justice—retribution on the house of the guilty. It is good for us to be reminded again and again that we were all the sons of a guilty house, upon whom rested the curse of the broken law; that we were *all,* by nature, "the children of *wrath,*

even as others" (Eph. 2:1, 2). Only in view of that solemn fact, can we begin to realize something of the amazing grace of God that has provided atonement for us. For wherewithal should *we* have made the atonement? Well might we ask in the words of the prophet: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Mic. 6:6, 7).

No, none of these offerings could suffice to avert the wrath of God from our heads. But God Himself has "found a Ransom." The seven sons of the house of Saul which were "delivered" to the Gibeonites, and hung up "before the Lord," signify the *completeness* which the atonement must have. And "He that spared not His own Son, but *delivered Him up* for us all" (Rom. 8:32), has met *fully* the necessities of our desperate case; and therefore we can say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (verse 33).

Accordingly, the judgment was executed, and the full retribution was exacted. For the king took seven of the sons of Saul, "and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and

they hanged them *in the hill* before the Lord; and they fell, all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, IN THE BEGINNING OF BARLEY HARVEST" (2 Sam. 21:9).

This record is surely intended to remind us of that other hill where the Son of man was lifted up to die on the cross for us. That, too, was "in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest," both in the literal sense, and in the figurative sense. This would not have been a season of joy for us, "the joy of harvest," but the beginning of eternal woe, had He not been made a curse for us. But, the atonement having been made, the long season of blessing, the acceptable year of the Lord, the time of harvest, is here. "Christ hath redeemed us from the *curse* of the law, being made a curse for us: (for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree); *that the blessing* of Abraham might come *on the Gentiles* through Jesus Christ; that we might receive"—not the judgment due for our sin, but—"the promise of the Spirit through faith."

So we, who believe on His Name, are, like Ruth, come to the right place, and at the right time, even at "the beginning of barley harvest."

VIII

RUTH'S "HAP"

"And she went, and came and gleaned after the reapers; and her hap happened to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech" (2:3, marg.).

WE have pointed out that Ruth's history, in its main features, corresponds with and beautifully illustrates the normal spiritual history of every believer. This will become more and more evident as we proceed with our examination of the deeply interesting and significant events which followed quickly upon Ruth's arrival at Bethlehem.

Ruth's history, thus far at least, is that of every one who comes to Christ, seeking mercy and grace through Him. For what is given to us in the book of Ruth is not so much the story of an individual who "found grace" (2:10), as it is the story of *God's dealings* with a "stranger" of the Gentiles who believed *the word* of His grace, and who came to trust under His wings. And since God is no respecter of persons, but extends the same mercies to all who seek Him in faith, it must needs follow that the story of one repentant and believing sinner is, in its main features, the story of all.

What set Ruth's feet in motion to seek the Lord God of Israel was, first, the pressure of a great need, and then the belief, based on the hearing of the word, that in Judah her need would be met by Him Who had visited His people in giving them bread. And this is the vital truth for the Gentile world in this present age, that "the Lord God of Israel" has "visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up an horn of salvation in the house of His servant David"—which salvation is for all the earth.

It is probable that Ruth's thoughts and expectations did not go beyond the idea that in Judah she would find help through Naomi's God —the God of Israel. So we believe it is the case with many of those who come to Christ (as it was with the present writer) that it is a sense of *great need,* great distress of mind, great misery, vague, indefinable oppression, rather than the distinct sense of sin, that awakens the first impulse to trust in Him. That Christ can and will help the helpless is the chief impression conveyed by the reading of the gospels. For we find Him relieving promptly and completely every case of human distress, sickness, deformity, deficiency, or demon-possession, and only in rare instances making conspicuous the fact (which other Scriptures bring out so clearly) that the great purpose of His mission was the saving of sinners *from their sins.*

According to our understanding of God's dealings in grace, it is not required or expected, as a condition precedent to salvation, that the sinner who seeks help through Jesus Christ should have a full comprehension of his own condition. The clear light as to that matter comes *afterward,* when, by the study of God's Word with a renewed mind and a believing heart, the pardoned sinner reaches something of a realization of what he was by nature, of the hideous corruption of his former state, and of the terrible and eternal judgment from which God, for Christ's sake and on the ground of His atoning work, has saved him. The turning point in the life of the sinner is when he *repents* or turns to God, and *trusts Christ;* and, in doing that, he may have a very imperfect understanding of the truth concerning sin, and of the actual facts of his own condition. His mind may be (as was the writer's at the time of his conversion) too confused through unexplained misery and depression, to have clear ideas on any subject, or to follow the most lucid explanations of the process of personal salvation. And yet he may have the conviction *in his heart* that Christ is able and willing to save him, and so believing, may put saving trust in Him. It is not often, we think, that an anxious soul who is inquiring after the way of salvation realizes that he is hopelessly and eternally lost and that his heart is utterly corrupt. Those things are in-

deed true; and every pardoned sinner comes to learn the truth of them in time. But our point is that it is too much to expect, and that God does not require as a condition necessary to salvation, that the awakened sinner, who is groping his way to God's redemption-ground, should have an intelligent grasp of those truths. It *is faith in Christ* that is needed for salvation, and not a comprehension of the process.

Ruth had not the faintest conception of the wonderful experiences and the rich mercies that awaited her. And thus it is in God's gracious ways with every dweller in the spiritual Moab, "this present evil world," who responds to the invitation of the Gospel by turning to God and trusting Christ. And therefore, by attentively following Ruth's history, we may get an idea of those wonderful and glorious things, which have not entered into the heart or mind of man to desire or imagine, but which God has prepared for them that love Him; and we may see also how, and by what simple and commonplace means, God leads the trusting and obedient one into those "prepared" things.

What meets us at the beginning of Chapter 2 is the fact that "Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz." Nothing is there said to give any idea of the significance of this fact, nor to indicate what, if any, interest it could have had for Ruth. It

was *Naomi's* kinsman, and that by marriage only; and it was not her *next* kinsman either; for it is said only that Boaz was "*of* the kindred of Elimelech" (verse 3). But we take notice of the significant facts that this kinsman of Elimelech was a "mighty man," and a man "of wealth," and that his name was "Boaz," which signifies "in him is strength." The import of these facts will be clearly seen as we proceed.

That Boaz is thus introduced to our notice as a figure or "shadow" (Heb. 10:1) of Christ is quite evident. The term "kinsman" signifies *one who has the right (and the responsibility)* to *redeem,* whatever that may involve, as to which we defer our remarks. The word, here translated "kinsman," is the very word used of the *Lord Himself* in the many passages in which He is called the "Redeemer." He is, in all those cases, viewed as the "Goel," or "Kinsman-Redeemer." As such the Lord is *specially identified with Israel.* This is pointed out in Romans 9:4, 5, where Paul is reciting the great and wonderful things which pertained to Israel, and where the climax is reached in the words, "And of whom (Israel) as concerning the flesh, *Christ came.*" The fact that Christ is thus related as Kinsman to Israel would signify nothing to Gentiles, and would convey no comfort to them. We see, therefore, how the fact that Christ is of *Israel,* as concerning the flesh,

corresponds with the statement that *Naomi,* a woman of Israel, had a kinsman, which fact, in itself, would have meant nothing to the Gentile stranger, Ruth. But God had, in His *hidden purposes of grace,* a "mystery.....which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit," namely, that "*Gentiles* should be fellow heirs, and of the *same body,* and partakers of His promise in Christ by (means of) the Gospel" (Eph. 3: 4-6). Now that this mystery of God's eternal purpose has been clearly revealed to us by the Spirit, we can trace many a type and shadow of it in the Old Testament, as here in the lovely story of the stranger from the country of Moab, who "found grace."

It would be difficult to suggest a subject more deeply interesting and more profitable than that of the "Goel" or Kinsman-Redeemer, into which subject our present inquiry leads us. But we will not anticipate the orderly unfolding of the story by attempting even to indicate at this point what it means to Israel and what it means to the individual sinner of the Gentiles to have a "Goel," that is to say, one who has *the obligations which the law of God laid upon the Kinsman-Redeemer,* and who also had the *means* and the *willingness* to discharge those obligations. We have only to note the fact that, at this point in the story, namely, *immediately*

upon Ruth's arrival at Bethlehem, Boaz is brought into view, and that Ruth's after history is all *shaped by him.*

The first day of Ruth's new life is now shown to us; and its first recorded incident is very instructive and very beautiful: "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said, Go, my daughter."

Ruth was a grown woman, and quite free to choose her own course. She had a perfect right to do as she pleased. Moreover, she was living in a day when *every one* did that which was right in his own eyes. Yet here is one woman, and she a "Moabitess," who would not even go forth for a day of humble toil without first asking and obtaining permission of her mother-in-law. This is well pleasing to the Lord, Who qualifies and makes use of the "elders" to give counsel and direction to the younger, to whom He says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder" (1 Pet. 5:5). And His eye notes every act of obedience and submission to His good way. Let us then (especially "ye younger") observe how that act of humble submissiveness on the part of Ruth, at the beginning of that eventful day, led on to blessings whereof she never dreamed. No wonder that, having begun by laying aside all self-confidence and self-pleasing, she was guided by

an invisible Hand, so that, although there were many fields and many owners of property in the plains of Bethlehem, "her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz." As the language of the original Hebrew, given in the margin, quaintly expresses it, "her *hap happened* upon a part of the field belonging to Boaz."

There was nothing to distinguish one part of the field from another; for there were no fences, only the boundary stones or "ancient landmarks" at the corners of adjacent properties, and these could be located only by search. Moreover, she had no reason to prefer one portion or one proprietor above another. So to all appearances it was merely a chance that her hap was to light on that particular part of the field which belonged to Boaz. But there are no mere chance happenings in the lives of those who belong to the Lord, and whom He has called according to His purpose. *He* arranges the incidents which shall serve to the accomplishment of His ends, though at the time there may be nothing whatever to suggest that He has had any hand in them. Frequently it is a seemingly trifling event that determines some action or step which leads eventually to results of great moment. There is probably not one of God's children but can look back upon many "hap happenings" which afterward, when viewed in the light of their results, were seen to have been

planned in the wisdom of God, in order to bring about His own blessed ends. Over and over again, the seemingly chance meeting with some one we were not expecting to see, the chance missing of a train or ship we had planned to take, the chance turning from the direct path we thought to follow, or some similar incident of the most commonplace order, was the means of bringing about something that changed our whole history, or that of others.

The writer of these pages can never forget one evening in the springtime (about the time of barley harvest) when his "hap happened" to be passing a building in New York City where an insignificant prayer-meeting was being held, and at just the moment when the few people gathered there (people of no influence, social standing or other worldly advantages) "happened" to be singing a hymn. The weak and unattractive sound of that song served to draw him into what was perhaps the last place in the world where he would have *planned* to go, and that on an evening when he had started out with the fixed intention of going to a theatrical performance. The merest chance it was, to all appearances; but there is even to this day no *natural* explanation for the strange fact that such a weak thread of sound, a mere cobweb for strength, should have drawn him into a place from which all his natural inclinations and acquired habits would have barred him. But

God's way is to use the "weak" things of the world in the accomplishing of His purposes, and so it was that on so trivial an incident hinged his own conversion to God, which in turn led on to the conversion of his family, and then to that of yet others; and also led on to innumerable things (including the writing of these pages) which his imagination in its wildest flights could never have contemplated.

Ruth began that day of days in her life with an act of humble submissiveness, and went forth with the desire only to "find grace." Evidently she had learned through Naomi of the merciful provision which the God of Israel had made for "the poor and the stranger," a provision that served not only to meet *their* necessity, but also to testify to the great fact that He Who made it was always, and is in every dispensation, "the God of all grace."

It is written in Leviticus 19: 9, 10:

> "And when ye reap the harvest of your land thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them *for the poor and the stranger*: I am the Lord" (See also Lev. 23: 22, in connection with the feast of Pentecost, the great harvest feast.)

And, again, it is written in the Law:

> "When thou cuttest down thy harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be *for the stranger*, for the fatherless, and *for the widow;* that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands" (Deut. 24:19).

By such commands as these the Lord would not only provide for the destitute—the poor, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow—but He would also teach His people to be *like Himself.* "For He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). Many are the admonitions given in the Scriptures to the people of God in regard to dealing their bread to the hungry (See for example Isa. 58:6-11), and *great* are the promised blessings to those who consider the poor and needy, and who relieve those that are in distress (Psa. 41:1-3; Matt. 25:35, 36). Let us give heed to these things and *do them.* Soon the opportunity will be gone. Let us be redeeming the time which remains (for the days are evil); and "as we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

The privilege of gleaning after the reapers and in the corners of the field was therefore a privilege which pertained to Ruth as a "stranger" and a "widow"; yet it was a privilege which the law gave her as a matter of *grace.*

And that doubtless is all she had in mind when she started out with the desire to "find grace." But *our* best and largest thoughts concerning grace come far short of the blessed reality; and therefore, when a child of Adam truly takes the position of seeking *grace,* there are rich surprises in store for him, (as were awaiting Ruth that day), whereof it will require eternity to reveal the full extent. For though we, who are "saved by grace through faith," "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," yet God has "quickened us together" (Jews and Gentiles) "with Christ (by *grace* ye are saved) and hath raised us up" (Jews and Gentiles) "together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; in order, "that in the *ages to come* He might show the *exceeding riches of His grace* in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:2-4).

IX

THE CONGREGATION OF THE LORD

"And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?"

HERE we have Ruth's introduction to the congregation of the Lord. After the description given us in the Book of Judges of the conditions prevailing in Israel at that time, we should not have expected to find, in all the land, such a company of people as is here presented to our view. But even when things are at their very worst, when apostasy is the order of the day, and when truth is so corrupted among professors of religion as to be scarcely recognizable, God has still His little companies here and there, hidden from the general view, but known to Him, His "twos" and "threes"; separated to Himself, who fear the Lord, who speak often one to another, and who think upon His Name (Mal. 3:16).

Even in this present time of departure from the truth of God and from His ways, there are little companies of those who believe in Him and who purpose to be guided by His Word in all things, a few separated ones who lift up their

hands in the sanctuary, and who say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you *in the Name of the Lord*" (Ps. 129:8).

This must have been a surprising experience for that stranger, who had been used all her days to the idolatrous and vile customs of heathen worship. But with Ruth things were happening in their proper order. For God's plan is that the "stranger," immediately upon conversion, should be brought into one of "the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16, etc.) or "churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33).

We now follow Ruth from the field of Boaz into his house; and we find many instructive lessons in the reception there accorded her, the stranger and abhorred foreigner. It should be observed in the first place that Ruth, in taking the humble place of a gleaner, had *followed the Word of God.* Therefore, she was guided by an invisible hand to the field of Boaz, and thence was brought into his house. Thus it will ever be with the children of God. If they will but consult His Word and *follow it,* they will surely be led into more and more of His blessed purposes and gracious provisions for them.

Also it is to be noted that, in that household, no prominence was given to any individual but to Boaz himself. Even the servant who was "set over the reapers" is not named. He was but a "servant" after all. Likewise there are no officials in a true church of God. Only One

Person is recognized, and only one Name is honored there. The Lord said, "For One is your Master, even Christ"; and "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Mat. 23:10, 11).

When a sinner is saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, certain things happen to him *immediately.* His sins are *all* forgiven; for he is "justified from *all* things" (Acts 13:39). He is born again (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 5:1); and he has the place of a *son* in the House of God, in association with the other members thereof. As it is written, "Now, therefore, ye are no more *strangers and foreigners,* but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of *the household of God"* (Eph. 2:19). And again, "For by one Spirit are we *all* baptized into one body; and have been *all* made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). And again, "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:6, 7). And again, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:24, 25). And again, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (1 Cor. 14:12).

The Scriptures which command and exhort with respect to the association of believers for the purpose of a collective testimony to the Name of the Lord, for mutual help and edification, and for the living out of their proper family life as the children of God, are numerous, and they are of the utmost importance. A great and vital part of the purpose of God depends upon the carrying out of Scriptures such as those quoted above; and the neglect of them is ever the cause of weakness and suffering among the Lord's people, of the failure in their testimony, of the paralysis of gospel-effort, and other serious evils. Neglect of the House of God causes the withdrawal of the rain of God's blessing, spiritual poverty and leanness, lack of the conversion of sinners, and weakness and dissension among saints (Hag. 1:6, 11; Zech. 8:10).

Particularly is it important that there should be a "congregation of the Lord," according to the heavenly pattern of the New Testament Church, into which the young converts, those precious "babes," can be immediately brought to receive protection, oversight, suitable companionship, and instruction in the right ways of the Lord. Conversions are none too common in these days; and of those souls who *are* brought to Christ through the weak evangelizing of our times, the majority are cast upon their own resources, with the natural result that

usually they drift into association with some "congregation of the dead" (Prov. 21:16), whereof there are thousands in the land.

The reception given to Ruth the stranger by this company of true Israelites must have made a wonderful impression upon her. O that such might be the experience of every "stranger" who is attracted to our meeting-places by the wonderful message that we preach. For we preach *grace*—the free bestowal of God's *best* upon those who have deserved His *worst*. What does that give outsiders the right to expect? And how far are their expectations met when they come among us? How much of the "grace" which we loudly proclaim with our lips do they find in our conduct? Is our manner of life such as "becometh the gospel of Christ?" If not, can we wonder that our preaching has so little result? We believe that many of the Lord's people have a real concern for the unsaved, and a real desire for the conversion of sinners. To such we declare our conviction that the effective means to that end is—not greater gospel activity, more "tent work," street meetings, tract-distribution, etc., but—that the saints of God should *be* together, and *live* together according to "the commandments of the Lord" contained in the New Testament Scriptures, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, having their hearts *knit together* in love, and striving together for the faith of the gos-

pel. When the saints of God are found in the *churches* of God, and the latter are what they should be, according to the pattern shown in the Mount, *then* we may confidently look for the blessing of God upon our efforts in the Gospel!

When Boaz came from Bethlehem to his company of reapers, he greeted them with the words, "The Lord be with you." Those words of greeting express all that could be wished by the Lord's people. They embrace all blessing, all health, all prosperity. And then, the *very next thing* after the exchange of greetings in the Lord's Name was the manifestation of Boaz' interest in the stranger. "Whose damsel is *this?*"

Could she have dreamed of such condescension? Could it have entered her mind that the lord of the harvest, the mighty man of wealth, would give her even so much as a look? Would not her greatest expectation have been that her presence might perhaps be tolerated, and allowed to pass unnoticed? Instead of that, she is made the object of the rich proprietor's special interest; for he loses no time in making a friendly inquiry concerning her.

What does this incident suggest? Should it not serve to remind us of the desire in our Lord's heart to receive the stranger, and to show His loving kindness to every one who seeks refuge in Him? Surely, the presence of

the newcomer must be a pleasing thing to the Lord when He comes into the midst of His assembly. "Whose damsel is this?" Boaz wishes to know all about her, and to make suitable arrangements for her welfare, before proceeding to any other matters. Thus the care of this foreigner, this "outlandish woman," takes precedence of all other business.

Let us, then, charge ourselves with responsibility to exhibit kindness to, and to show friendly interest in, the stranger who ventures (perhaps with reluctance, almost certainly with prejudice and suspicion) to come among us. What made an impression on the writer (the *only* impression which was really favorable) the night his "hap happened" to enter a little prayer-meeting where practically everything was contrary to his tastes and ideas of religious propriety, was the kindly interest shown by several who were there, expressed merely by a handshake and a pleasant word. But for those manifestations of interest in and care for the stranger, the writer would probably not have gone to that place again.

It is worthy of special note that "the servant that was set over the reapers," to whom Boaz addressed his question about Ruth, was able to give *at once* the desired information. This is a valuable indication of the order and discipline prevailing in Boaz' household, showing that his servants fully understood his ways,

and that they were careful to observe them. That servant evidently understood Boaz would wish to know at once who this newcomer was, and what her reputation was. And not only for her own sake would he make inquiry, but for the sake of his household also; for it would be his duty to ascertain whether the newcomer were a suitable associate for his "young men" and "maidens."

There is a needed lesson in this for those who are "set over" the House of God. Their duty is to inform themselves *promptly* concerning every one who comes into the company of the Lord's people. Indifference in such a matter may have harmful results. There is need that the household of God be protected from undesirable associates, especially in a day when the enemy of God is seeking by every means to destroy God's assemblies. And there is need also that strangers should receive proper attention and consideration according to their circumstances.

In the case of Ruth the overseer's report was altogether satisfactory. She had, with becoming humility, sought permission to glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; and she had continued at that labor from morning until that moment, when she had tarried for only a little while in the house.

On hearing this good account of the newcomer, Boaz proceeds to put her at ease in the

household, to "make her feel at home," as we would say, and to extend to her all the privileges of the house. The first words he addressed to her must have sounded sweetly in her ears,—"Hearest thou not, *my daughter*?" Surely this stranger had indeed "found grace." The lord of the manor, that mighty man of wealth, not only condescends to notice her, and to inquire concerning her, but he addresses her by a title of honor and affection, "my daughter," a title which, in itself, placed her upon a footing of highest privilege in the household.

This reminds us of the wonderful fact that every one who comes to God, believing in the Son of God, is not only cleansed from his sins, but is given the place, not of a bond-servant, but of a *son* or *daughter* in the family of God! The privileges of the house are for the youngest members thereof, as well as for the oldest; for God has placed them "among the children"; as was written to converts among the Gentiles: "For ye are all the children (sons) of God by faith in Jesus Christ....And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 3:26; 4:6).

The title "daughter" defines a relation that is not only tender and intimate, but also *permanent.* It placed Ruth upon a footing very different from that of a mere guest or visitor, a footing to which are attached not only privi-

leges, but responsibilities also, and those of a *permanent character.*

It is very desirable that the children of God should be instructed in regard to the wonderful position into which God has brought them in His grace. Many of them seem to have no conception at all as to what is involved in their relationship to God in Christ, and their relationship to all who are Christ's. If the facts concerning these things, as set forth in God's Word, were grasped by the children of God, and if they were to set about to live *according to those facts,* it would bring about a transformation in the affairs of men such as the world has never seen.

Truly there is no question more serious for every one of us, and none that demands more careful consideration than this: *"How far does my life correspond with the facts of Scripture regarding my relationship with God?"* Surely we must confess that, through ignorance, indifference, and unbelief, the truth of God is, in this important particular, almost entirely set aside. The consequence is that God is robbed of His glory, the children of God are deprived of the benefits which the family-life, according to the pattern of Scripture, (that is to say, church-fellowship) was intended to secure for each and all of them, and the world is deprived of the convincing testimony which the Lord desired should be presented before it (John 17:21).

But where failure is recognized there is always a remedy in God, through confession, and through a humble seeking after the old paths, the good way in which He would have us walk. What is needed, therefore, on the part of the children of God, is to recognize and confess their failure in this respect, and to seek recovery and restoration of the conditions that existed among the Lord's people in the days of the apostles.

The first words spoken by Boaz to Ruth not only made her acquainted with her own standing in the household, but also impressed upon her a most important condition which, as a *daughter* of the family, she was expected to observe:

> "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here, fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

These words contain food for much and profitable meditation. What appears prominently is that *the household of Boaz was something separate and apart from all other households in the land.* Two important matters are referred to: first, as to Ruth's *service* or *occupation,* she was

not to glean in any other field; and, second, as to her *associations* or *fellowship,* she was not to go from thence, but to abide *fast* by the maidens of Boaz. She was given fully to understand, by those few words, that she would find *suitable occupation* and *suitable companionship* without going elsewhere. And what followed gave her further to understand that she would also find, in the household thus thrown open for her reception, every provision for her *protection* and her *support.*

There are two possible ways in which Ruth might have regarded the words, "go not, but abide here." She might have taken them as a restriction upon her liberty of action, as narrowing her to one place, and confining her to a particular and small company of associates. She might have looked abroad upon other fields, and have seen other bands of workers in more desirable locations, perhaps, and engaged in occupations more attractive to her heart than the simple tasks awaiting her in the household of Boaz. She might even have thought that there were better opportunities for service to be found elsewhere, and that she might "do more good" by joining in the activities of other busy groups engaged on various attractive and showy enterprises, having commendable objects in view. She might have regarded and desired the society of other companies of "maidens," possibly more gaily dressed, more frolicsome,

more free and easy in their ways. No doubt a household living as that of Boaz, in the fear of the Lord, would be characterized by sobriety, and would lack many things that appeal to the natural heart. Had such thoughts as these been in her mind, then the words of Boaz would have seemed arbitrary, and the restrictions imposed by them would have been galling.

But, on the other hand, she might have esteemed it (as in fact she did), a *high privilege* to be in the place of separation, and might have welcomed (as in fact she did), the opportunity *to please the one in whose eyes she had "found grace,"* by *keeping his commandments.* For it is evident that to Ruth, his commandments were "not grievous." Moreover, it would soon have become evident to her that the restrictions were not arbitrary, but that they were needful both for the welfare of the household, and for the honor of its head. One who is charged with the responsibility of a large household must needs keep its members near to himself. Moreover, *he* knows better than *they* the dangers that await those who venture outside. Having provided shelter and protection for them, he must needs require that they "abide" therein.

Furthermore, the head of the household both needs the services of the several members thereof, and he also delights in their presence. It plainly is a great wrong to him who has made every provision for the good of his family,

when one and another betakes himself elsewhere, perhaps to engage in service outside, and to form associations of his own choice. We are sure the reader will need no assistance in order to apply these simple lessons to "the household of God," over which He has given the Risen Christ to be the Head (Eph. 1:22; Heb. 3:6), the household which embraces all those who, by rich grace, have been made the children of God. For these God has, in His perfect wisdom, provided *fruitful service* (Eph. 2:10), *protection, supplies of every kind,* and *companionship.* Nothing is lacking that is for their good. But the things for which the natural heart craves, are outside; and, moreover, plausible reasons are easily found for indulging in a carnal "liberty," which leads the children into taking part in the works planned for the betterment of a world already condemned and soon to be destroyed, and into companionship with those who shun the offence of the cross, and "who mind earthly things."

In talking the matter over at the end of the day, Naomi impressed the same lesson upon the mind of Ruth, saying: "It is *good,* my daughter, that thou go out with *his* maidens, that they meet thee not *in any other field*" (verse 22).

Yes, it is "good" that we keep in company with "*His* maidens," that is to say, with the people of God; and it is good that they meet us not in any other field. What will they natur-

ally think if they see us in other company, and in another field? Are we dissatisfied with the companionship which the Lord has supplied, and with the field of service into which He has called us?

Ruth had solemnly declared to Naomi, "*thy* people shall be *my* people." She had accepted them all without seeing them or knowing them. And now her "hap" is to find herself in the household of Naomi's kinsman; and her sincerity is thereby put to the test.

So it is with ourselves, who "belong to Christ." When we accepted Him, we virtually said, "*Thy* people shall be *my* people." That choice is necessarily involved in our accepting Christ, for thereby we accept all them that are Christ's. It matters not at all whether they be uncongenial to us, whether we "like" them, or dislike them, whether we would have chosen other associates. These are the "chosen *of God.*" *His* is the choice, not ours. "God hath set the members *every one of them* in the body, as it hath *pleased Him*" (1 Cor. 12:18). And if it pleased Him to choose those with whom we find ourselves gathered, *we* had best be pleased also. And more than that, to love the members of God's family, who are of *our* family also, is a duty. For "this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God *love his brother also*" (1 John 4:21). And again, "Every one

that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1).

Furthermore, in a well ordered household, the duties are distributed among the several members in such manner that the work as a whole suffers when any are absent (Eph. 4:16). And not only so, but the effective service of some members depends upon the coöperation of others. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of thee." Nor could the hand do its work properly without the continued coöperation of the eye. Thus the absence of one member causes his own share of the work t fail and also makes it more difficult for others to do their own part.

Therefore, when a child of God realizes something of the great truth that he has been made by grace a member of the family of God, and has been clothed with certain definite and reciprocal obligations towards others whom God has, in His sovereignty, chosen for a like position of favor and privilege, he will recognize that the rules given by the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, as Son of God is "over His own house" (Heb. 3:6), are not arbitrary, but are wise and most necessary, both for the integrity of the household, and for the good of all its members. Wherefore, if we have "come out," let us by all means "be separate." Then, indeed, the Lord Almighty will *be* a Father unto us; and we shall be unto Him "sons and daughters."

X

UNDER HIS WINGS

"The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust" (RUTH 2: 12).

RUTH, though a stranger, and one whom the law put "afar off" from Israel, had nevertheless "come" to the Lord God of Israel, and had come definitely resolving to "trust" in Him; for she had said to Naomi, and with sincere purpose of heart; "Thy God shall be *my God.*" Truly, "blessed" (i. e., *happy*) "are all they that put their trust in Him." Ruth's experience proves this; and since God is no respecter of persons, every one may prove it in his own experience by coming to Him in simple faith through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Ruth had found *at once* that which met her immediate need; and in like manner every repentant and believing sinner finds at once the Bread of life, and the pardon of his past sins. And Ruth *also* found humble but fruitful labor in the fields of one who (though she did not even suspect it at the time) was prepared to assume towards her, the abhorred foreigner, all the

responsibilities of the "Goel," or Kinsman-Redeemer.

This brings to mind the great fact that those who have "found grace" through Jesus Christ are saved in order to *serve.* God has work for each and every one of them in *His* harvest-field (and it is "good" for them not to be seen in any other). For Christ has redeemed us from all iniquity that He might purify to Himself a people for His very own, *zealous of good works* (Tit. 2:14, 15).

We have noticed some of the remarkable correspondences between the incidents recorded in the book of Ruth, and the truth unfolded in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, which contains the revelation of *God's grace to Gentiles*—those who, like Ruth, are by nature "*aliens* from the commonwealth of Israel, and *strangers* from the covenants of promise, having *no hope,* and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). But these, when saved "by grace," are brought nigh to God in Christ Jesus, by His blood, and thereafter are no longer "strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (verses 13, 19). To these it is at once made known that they are created anew in Christ Jesus "*unto good works,* which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them" (v. 10). This truth is very beautifully illustrated in the experience of Ruth, who found the good works, as it were, *prepared be-*

forehand for her to *walk in,* and found, moreover, one who interested himself in her labors and made them exceedingly fruitful.

But that is not all, nor is it the greatest of the blessings which this "stranger" found awaiting her when she came to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel. She found, as already noticed, not only a place in "the field" for service, but a place "in the house" for rest, refreshment, companionship, and even communion with the lord of the establishment. This corresponds with the truth concerning the believer's part and place in the House of God, so fully unfolded in Ephesians.

But, great and wonderful as were those privileges and blessings, what touched the heart of this stranger, and bowed her to the earth in grateful adoration, was that *Boaz himself* should "take knowledge" of her, and should have "spoken friendly" unto her (or, as the literal reading is, *to her heart*). For when she had *heard his words,* "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I *found grace in thine eyes,* that thou shouldest *take knowledge* of me, seeing I am a stranger?" (Ruth 2:10).

This surely is an example worthy to be followed by those who are saved by grace. And such must ever be the effect upon those who, being by nature "strangers," "enemies" and "aliens," have "found grace" through trust-

ing the Lord Jesus Christ Who, though He was "rich," beyond all our power to imagine, yet, for our sakes became *poor,* that we "*through His poverty* might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). For the very essence of "grace" is that the object on which it is bestowed is *utterly unworthy.* Favor shown to a deserving one would not be "grace." But when God takes up those who have merited His condemnation and wrath, in order that He may pardon and cleanse them from defilement, may make them in every respect fit for His own presence, and may bring them into His family *on the footing of children*; and when He does all this at the infinite cost of delivering up to the dread consequences of our sins His own beloved Son—to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities—this, yes, "*this* is the TRUE GRACE OF GOD wherein we stand" (1 Pet. 5:12).

Well may each of us ask: "Why have *I* found grace in Thy sight, that Thou shouldst take knowledge of *me*?" And the more clearly we see ourselves in the light of God's Word, as deformed and defiled by sin, corrupted in our thoughts and desires, enemies and aliens in our minds through wicked works, the clearer it will be that the reason, which moved Him to pay the great price of our redemption, is not to be discovered in what *we* were, but solely in what *He is.*

The next words of Boaz show the value he placed on the fact that Ruth had left her father and her mother and the land of her nativity, and had come to a people that she knew not theretofore. What marked Abraham as a man of faith was that, at God's bidding, he left his "country," his "kindred" and his "father's house" (Gen. 12:1); and this is true in a spiritual sense of all "the household of faith," which is composed of the children of Abraham —"Who is the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16). As it is written again, "They which are of *faith,* the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). Only *by faith* is it possible for fallen man to please God; and "*without faith* it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

In this connection Boaz appropriately speaks of *rewards for service, saying:* "The Lord recompense thy work, and a *full reward* be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust." Grace not only bestows *gifts,* but it also provides opportunity to gain *rewards.* The Apostle John uses similar language, saying: "Look to yourselves that we lose not the things which we have wrought, but that we receive a *full reward*" (2 John 8). Moses "had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:26); and Paul also kept in

view the *prize* of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). And, again, with reference to his service as a preacher of the Gospel, Paul said: "For if I do this thing willingly, I have *a reward*" (1 Cor. 9:17). The same principle applies to all who serve the Lord Christ. If they be called to labor in the harvest-field, then "every man shall receive *his own reward* according to his own labour"; and if it be to labour on God's House, we read as to that: "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive *a reward*" (1 Cor. 3:8, 14).

Boaz not only prayed the Lord's blessing on Ruth's labours, but he interested himself therein in such a way as to insure a fruitful result. For when she returned to her toil he commanded his young men, saying: "Let her glean even among the sheaves....and let fall also some of the handfuls* of purpose for her, that she may glean them."

Every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ finds by experience the truth of His saying, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Boaz' practical interest in the labors of Ruth made a very great difference in the *results*. So the disciples found, after a night of effort in which they caught "nothing," that when the *Lord* took the direc-

*It may be useful to point out that the word here translated "handfuls" is quite a different word from that so translated in other passages. It means a lock of stalks, and signifies not a meagre quantity, but the contrary.

tion of their operations they were not able to draw the net for the great multitude of the fishes it enclosed (John 21:3-6). The Lord's blessing can "increase the fruits" of our efforts, multiplying the results, just as He multiplied the loaves and fishes.

This brings into view another aspect of the grace of God, namely, *grace to serve Him effectively.* Paul speaks of his own labours in the Gospel, comparing them with those of other Apostles, and saying: "His *grace* which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: *yet not I, but the grace of God* which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). Thus even the fruits of our labours, where these are fruitful at all, will be to the praise of His grace. "Grace lays in heaven the topmost stone, and well deserves the praise."

The measure of Ruth's gleanings in the field of Boaz, is recorded for us. "It was about an ephah of barley." In Exodus 16 is described the gathering of the manna in the wilderness; and it is stated that each one was strictly limited to a single day's supply—one omer. The amount specified was "an omer for every man" (Ex. 16:16). And at the end of that chapter it is stated that "an omer is the tenth part of an ephah."

From this it appears that Ruth was able to gather *ten times* the amount of one day's pro-

vision. The result evidently caused astonishment to Naomi, prompting her to ask: "Where hast thou gleaned to-day, and where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee" (verse 19). Certainly, when we labor in the right field, keeping to the path of those good works which the God of all grace has prepared for us to walk in, the results will be profitable and abundant.

One other privilege was accorded to the stranger who "found grace," even a place at the table of Boaz, where she was served, first by his direction, and then *by his own hand.* We quote verses 13 and 14:

> "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly (lit., *to the heart*) unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.
>
> "And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers. And he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left."

The first words which Boaz had spoken to this humble stranger had "comforted" her, in putting her at ease in his presence. He had spoken to her *heart* (See marg.). Such was and is the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. When He was on earth the poor and the lowly, the

outcast and the wretched, the publicans and the harlots, came freely to Him, and He "comforted" them; for He spoke *to their hearts.*

It is the character of the Gospel of Christ that it is addressed to *the heart*; and its proper effect is to produce faith *in the heart,* leading the hearer to trust in Him. Moreover, it imparts "comfort" to those who believe it. We see that Boaz first gave comfort to Ruth and met her need; and then he sent her forth to labors which his own providing made successful. In like manner, the Lord Jesus says: "Come unto Me and I will *give* you rest" (lit., *refresh you*); and *then* He speaks of service: "Take *My yoke* upon you....and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

In those first words by which Boaz comforted the stranger, he had said: "When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn" (verse 9); which reminds us of those words of Gospel-invitation: "Ho! everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Is. 55:1). And again: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

But now, after Ruth had been properly introduced and received as a *permanent member* of the family and an inmate of the house, and after she had heard and submitted to the rules of the house in regard to separation from all outside

associations, whether for work or companionship, she is brought to *Boaz' table,* where she sits beside the reapers, in full fellowship with them, and is told to "eat of the bread" and take of the vinegar, and is served by Boaz' own hand. Thus she comes into the enjoyment of that which significantly shadows forth the highest privilege and honor found among the Lord's people—a place at the Table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21).

When Ruth shared with her mother-in-law the bountiful results of her first day's labor in the field upon which her hap was to light, and when Naomi heard Ruth say: "The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz," the former saw at once that the hand of the Lord was in this; and it prompted her to exclaim: "Blessed be he of the Lord, Who hath *not left off His kindness* to the living and to the dead." And Naomi further said unto her: "The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen."

Naomi's view of the Lord's previous dealings with her had been expressed in her reply to the greetings of the town-folk of Bethlehem, to whom she had said: "Call me not Naomi (Pleasantness), call me Mara (Bitterness); for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and *the LORD* hath brought me home again empty. Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" (1:20, 21).

How ready we are when trials come upon us, to complain of the Lord's dealings, to attribute our afflictions to Him, and to lose sight completely of *the purpose* He has in view when He allows afflictions to fall upon His people!

It is hard for us to look beyond the season of trial, and to anticipate by faith "the *end* of the Lord" (that is to say, *the purposes* He is accomplishing by means of it), and to keep in mind "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (Jas. 5:11). Naomi had said: "The hand of the LORD is gone out against me" (1:13). But *now* she plainly sees, in what had happened that day, His hand stretched out in mercy. *Now* she is made to realize and to confess that the Lord had "not left off His kindness." Why should those who know the Lord ever think, for even a moment, that He would leave off His kindness toward them? It is a striking and a most comforting fact that even at a time of sore chastising for the sins and iniquities of His people, He admonished them in these words: "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and *knoweth Me,* that I am the LORD, which exerciseth *loving kindness,* judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things *I delight,* saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:24).

But Naomi had the discernment to perceive, in the apparently chance happening which put Ruth in the field of Boaz, the prospect of great

and wonderful things. Her words plainly showed that; for she spoke of the Lord's kindness not to the living only, but also *to the dead.* What did she mean by that? The sequel will show. But her next words give a hint. "The man," said she, "is *near of kin* unto us, one of our *next kinsmen.*"

To Ruth the fact of Boaz' kinship to Naomi might have meant very little; for rich men are not often famous for benevolence to their poor relations. But *to one who knew the law of the Lord,* in which His "loving kindness" and "righteousness" are declared, to one who knew His statutes and judgments, which are true and righteous altogether—more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold—the fact of Boaz' kinship meant *very much indeed.* Looking at the marginal reading we learn (as has been already pointed out) that the words "next kinsman" signify "one that has *the right to redeem.*" It was therefore the prospect of *Redemption* which presented itself to Naomi's mind. So here we catch a glimpse of what we believe to be the great subject of the book of Ruth.

Our thought is that this book has been given to the Lord's people mainly for the purpose of showing them what and how much is involved in that grand word, "Redemption," which we use so often and perhaps comprehend so imperfectly. Naomi, the stricken relic of a dead

family, saw hope here for the *dead* as well as for the living. She saw hope through Boaz of what to us would stand for *resurrection*—our Redeemer's mightiest work. She saw what, in the law, is a foreshadowing of the glorious truth which came from the Redeemer's lips when He stood at the tomb of Lazarus and said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, *though he were dead* yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

But He Who has redeemed us by His blood, is also the One Whom we confess as "Lord," the One Whose commandments we are called to obey. Ruth speaks to Naomi of the word of command which she had received, and which evidently impressed itself upon her, as appears by the next verse of our chapter: "And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest." This command derived greater force and authority from the fact that it came from the "Goel." So Naomi takes pains to impress it upon her young companion, saying: "It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with *his* maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field."

These words were not without effect upon that young woman, who is so admirable for her humble-mindedness and teachableness. For we read what is written to her credit, and also for

our admonition, in the closing words of this deeply interesting and instructive record: "So she *kept fast* by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest, and dwelt with her mother-in-law."

Let us, too, see to it that we are mindful of Him to whom we belong, Who bought us with a great price to be His own peculiar people. It is good for us, too, that they meet us not in any other than *His* field—whether of political service, or social, or religious—or in any other companionship than that of *His people.* Let us see to it that we refuse not Him that speaketh, but abide in Him Who is Head over "*His own house,* Whose house are we, if we *hold fast* the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

XI

THE GOEL

IT seems appropriate at this point to give our readers an explanation of that remarkable feature of the law of God which provided for the benefit of the impoverished Israelite a "goel," or "kinsman"; for it is necessary to understand that part of the law (which is quite simple) in order that we may follow intelligently and profitably the incidents recorded in chapters 3 and 4 of the book of Ruth.

We might regard the words "find grace" as the characteristic words of chapters 1 and 2, of that book; and "find rest" (1:19; 3:1) as the characteristic words of chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 begins with the words: "Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not *seek rest* for thee, that it may be well with thee?" What Naomi had in mind was to seek the performance by Boaz of "the part of a kinsman" (verse 13). So we would now ascertain *just what were the duties which the law imposed on the Goel, or Kinsman-redeemer.*

The first of those duties of kinship was to *redeem* or *buy back* the inheritance of the poor relation, who had been compelled, through pov-

erty, to part with it. As we read in Leviticus 25:25:

> "If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to *redeem* it, then shall he *redeem* that which his brother have sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself *be able* to redeem it, then let him count the years of the sale thereof," etc.

Every Israelite had an inheritance; and had conditions in Israel been maintained according to the mind of God, there would not have been any poverty-stricken Israelites. Each one would have cultivated his own inheritance, and, through the blessing of the Lord, would have been bountifully supplied with every needful thing, and with an abundance, beyond his own needs, for offerings to the Lord and for the generous support of His priests. But, inasmuch as the people of Israel were only men in the flesh, they fell far short of their privileges and hence the need for such a gracious provision as this on behalf of those stricken by poverty. And that necessity also furnished an occasion for the Lord to teach important lessons to His spiritual people of this dispensation—"the Israel of God" (1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 6:16).

In God's arrangements for Israel we can see clear indications of what His plan was in creating man and placing him in the earth. The earth was man's "inheritance"; for "the earth

hath He given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:16). But man lost his possessions through sin; and hence the matter of *redemption* is one of great importance for him. If he realized the facts of the case he would be anxious to know all about the law of redemption. He would also be most anxious to learn whether there be for him a *redeemer,* able to deal with the situation. And the question arises, Is man himself "*able* to redeem"? The natural man considers himself well able to redeem the inheritance. He has been going about it, in his own way, for some thousands of years; and notwithstanding the uniform failure of all his gigantic efforts, he seems as full as ever of self-confidence. Whatever the final outcome may be, it is certain that thus far he has not been able to "restore the overplus to the man to whom he sold it, that he may return unto his possession." So the Devil remains still in possession of man's inheritance. But the law contains a provision which gives a strong hint of what will happen. That hint is found in the words, "But if he *be not able* to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until *the year of jubilee*" (Lev. 25:28).

It should be perhaps explained, for the benefit of some of our readers, that the word "redeem" means (in its primary signification, which we are here considering) to *buy back,* or

buy again, or *re-purchase.* It refers, therefore, to property which has *passed out of the hands of the original owner,* either by a sale or a pledge in security of a loan, and which he *buys back* under the provisions of the laws governing such cases.

As an illustration, we may take the common case of one who borrows a sum of money from a pawnbroker, leaving a watch or other piece of property as pledge. The borrower receives a document (called a "pawn ticket") certifying to his right, within a limited time, to *redeem* the property by paying the principle sum, with the accumulated interest and other charges, if any. It will be observed that *only the original owner,* or someone acting *on his behalf,* has *the right to redeem* the pledged property.

A case even more nearly in point is that of the borrowing of a sum of money, and giving a deed of trust or "mortgage" on a piece of real estate to secure repayment. The term "mortgage" means a death *pledge;* for it is *death* to the owner's possession of the property if he does not pay the principal sum and interest within the stipulated time. In this case the original owner is usually allowed to occupy the premises during the period of the mortgage, subject, however, to foreclosure, if he fails to meet his *full obligations* at the time limited in the deed. But even while he so remains in occupation of the mortgaged premises, *another has*

a prior claim; and the day of settlement is ever drawing nearer, while interest and charges are accumulating.

This corresponds closely to man's tenancy of the world. Though he is temporarily occupying it, the Devil holds the "death pledge" on it, and *on him;* and the incumbrances and charges are accumulating all the time, while the day of settlement of man's accounts draws near. Surely if the poor, overburdened tenant were aware of the facts of the case, he would be *most anxious* to know if there be a "Goel" for him. But "the god of this world" has many ways of blinding the minds of them that believe not, and hiding the facts from them (2 Cor. 4:4).

But, in the case of mortgaged real estate, there remains, according to the common law, *even after foreclosure proceedings,* an "equity of redemption," as it is called; from which we see that both the usage, and even *the name,* have come down to us from ancient times. This "right of redemption" lasts for a certain period; and it pertains only to the original owner or his "next of kin," who would be, in that case, the Goel. We find the expression in Jeremiah 32:6-12, where Jeremiah's cousin came to him asking that he purchase a certain field, and saying: "Buy my field——for *the right of redemption is thine.*" It is an important feature of the lesson we are now studying that the "right of redemption," in any given

case, pertains to certain special persons, and is strictly a matter of *kinship*.

But there is another important point in connection with the subject of redemption which should be clearly understood. To "redeem," in its *proper* sense, means simply to pay the amount due with all the accumulated charges. Having done that, the redeemer is entitled to take possession of the forfeited property. But suppose the "stranger," who holds it in pledge refuses (as sometimes happen) to deliver it up? In that case, the lawful owner must resort to the strong arm of the law to compel, *by force,* the surrender of that for which he has paid the price. This *forcible taking possession* is also called "redemption." Technically, the paying of the price is called "proper redemption," and the taking possession by force is called "improper redemption." This double meaning of the word "redemption" accounts for the fact that, in the New Testament, redemption is sometimes spoken of as *already accomplished,* for instance in Heb. 9:12, "*having obtained* eternal redemption"; and sometimes as *future,* for instance in Luke 21:28, "Then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption *draweth nigh.*"

The first chapter of Ephesians furnishes a clear example of the use of the word "redemption" in each of these two senses; and it is very enlightening to note and to understand the dif-

ference. In verse 7, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle says: "In Whom we *have* redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." This tells us that we, who believe in Him, already "*have* redemption," because the price—"His blood"—has been paid, and all the incumbrances (*our sins*) have been cleared off, and no longer stand against us. But *the purchased property has not yet been all restored to the rightful Owner's possession.* The Devil, that old remorseless "mortgagee," still holds on to the redeemed inheritance—that is, *the earth;* although the redeemed *persons* already enjoy deliverance from his authority. Hence there is need of an act of *power* to gain the possession of that which has been already bought back. Thus it is also written in the same passage that while awaiting that *future* redemption, we, the redeemed, have received the Holy Spirit, "Who is the earnest of our inheritance *until the redemption of the purchased possession*" (ver. 14). So we have the past redemption (the price paid), in verse 7, and future redemption (the taking possession of the redeemed inheritance) in verse 14. This, we think, will be quite clear.

Also, in Eph. 4: 30, we find the words: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed *unto the day of redemption.*" These words evidently place the day of redemption

in the future, showing that the One Who has paid the price of redemption, has not yet taken possession of the property, and that the Holy Spirit is meanwhile given as the seal and pledge of the coming "day of redemption."

Again, in the important passage in Romans 3:24, 25, redemption past, by the blood of Christ, is spoken of; whereas in Romans 8:23, we, the subjects of blood-redemption, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, are said to "groan within ourselves *waiting for* the adoption, the *redemption* of our body."

But the law provided not only for the redemption of the *property* of an impoverished Israelite, but also for the more serious case of the redemption of his *person,* should he, through dire misfortune, be sold into slavery. This is even of deeper interest. So we read this important provision of God's wondrous law:

> "And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and *sell himself* to the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold *he may be redeemed again;* one of his *brethren* may redeem him. Either his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him, or any that is *nigh of kin* unto him of his family may redeem him; or *if he be able,* he may redeem himself" (Lev. 25:47-49).

When a man reads these words with spiritual intelligence they clearly convey to him the im-

portant fact that men, though "sold under sin," are at least *redeemable;* and they should spur him to inquire carefully as to what conditions must be fulfilled in order to accomplish the desired redemption. This provision would never have been written in the law (which contains the shadows of "good things to come") were there not *Redemption* for the bond-slaves of sin, and a *Kinsman-Redeemer* "able" and also *willing* to meet fully the conditions which the law imposes.

For men, instead of occupying in the world that place of dominion and supreme authority for which God intended them, have become slaves to a foreign despot, namely, that great being who has "the power of death, that is, the Devil" (Heb. 2:14); and have become subject to "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1). For we may regard the Devil as being that "Stranger" to whom the human race has been sold by the head of the race (Adam) and "the stock of the stranger's family" to be the evil powers, vices and passions, by which men are, one and all, enslaved. But—eternal praises be to the God of all grace—*the law grants redemption.* Here is hope. (Only let it be noted that the redeemer must be "nigh of kin unto him").

We note also the words, *"if he be able,* he may redeem himself." That is a very large "if"; though, alas! many are deceived into thinking that, by some efforts of their own—

along the lines of religion, or morality, or benevolent deeds, or character-building, or a combination of some two or more of these—they *may be* able to accumulate the price required to *buy themselves* out of the condition into which they have been brought through sin.

The idea of *redeeming himself,* or of contributing at least *something* to the price of his redemption, appeals strongly to the pride and self-confidence of the natural heart of man. In this fact lies the secret of the powerful hold which the great religions of the world have taken upon the masses of unenlightened people of every race and nation. The essence of every one of these great and flourishing religions is that they cast the poor sinner upon his own efforts, bidding him by means of religious works, or by the pretended virtue of sacramental ordinances, or by charitable deeds, and the like, gain for himself some "merit" with God as a part-payment (so to speak) of the price of his redemption. In the clear light, however, of God's holy Word, it is seen that not only are all such efforts utterly vain and utterly worthless, but also that they put dishonor upon the great Redeemer's work, and rob Him of the glory of paying *all* the price, and accomplishing "eternal redemption" *at His own cost.*

A man needs to be enlightened as to the futility of all human efforts to contribute anything whatever towards the price of Redemption, and

to learn, also, from the Word of God the utter hopelessness of his own case, and the impossibility of paying the price of the redemption of a *single soul,* though he had all the wealth of the world, and all the resources of nature at his disposal. The words of Psalm 49 are very pertinent in this connection:

> "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means *redeem his brother,* nor give to God a ransom for him; (for the redemption of their soul is *precious,* and it ceaseth forever); that he should *still live forever* and not see corruption" (verses 6-9).

The word "precious" here has the sense of *costly,* indicating the great price which must be paid for the redemption of a single human being. Another reading of verses 4 and 5 is as follows: "A brother can none of them redeem. He cannot give to God a ransom for himself: *So costly* is the redemption of their soul that it faileth forevermore."

But the writer of that Psalm knew not only the inability of man to redeem his brother, but knew also *where to look for redemption,* as he says in verse 15: "*But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave;* for He shall receive me." And answering to this we have the distinct promise of Hosea 13:14: "*I* will ransom them from the power of the grave; *I*

will *redeem them from death.* O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destructions."

It will greatly assist us in comprehending certain passages of Scripture to keep in mind the foregoing provisions of the law "concerning redeeming" (Ruth 4:7). For example, let us view Hebrews 2:14, 15 in this light:

> "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and *deliver them* who through fear of death were all their lifetime *subject to bondage.*"

We see that those whom God purposed to save and to make His children were "all their lifetime subject to *bondage,*" they being thus in bondage, "through fear of death" (*i. e.,* subject to death's authority) whereof the Devil holds the "power." In order to set them free, the Lord must redeem them, by paying the price—His own life. The point we wish to make clear is that the Devil's grasp upon "the children" has been destroyed because *their debt has been fully discharged* through their Redeemer's death; for He "*through death*" nullified the Devil's hold upon them.

But, before He could *redeem,* He must become a "Kinsman"; and hence, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also

Himself likewise *took part of the same.*" Only in the light of the law of the kinsman are the beauties, and the force also, of such passages fully revealed.

One other duty was imposed by law upon the next of kin, a duty which illustrates truth of the deepest interest. But that third obligation will be considered later. We just state, at this point, that there remains for our considering yet another and *exceedingly important* feature of the law of the kinsman.

XII

"NOT LEFT WITHOUT A KINSMAN"

"And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman" (RUTH 4: 14).

THERE is no fact of more importance to man, in his present impoverished and enslaved condition, than the fact that God has not left him "without a Kinsman"; but has given him, in that relationship, One Who is "rich" (2 Cor. 8: 9) and "mighty" (Prov. 23: 11), a Kinsman Who is abundantly "able" (Heb. 7: 25), and is also *willing* to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him.

As regards the present condition of the human race, brought about "by one man's disobedience," we have thus far taken account only of his *poverty* and his *bondage*. There is however, yet another feature of his condition which intensifies his need of a redeemer; but we reserve that for later consideration, desiring at this point to dwell a little further upon man's impoverishment and his enslavement to sin and death. For it is of the utmost importance that men should be awakened to the truth regarding the conditions into which they all are

born—conditions created by sin from the very beginning of man's history.

Sin has, indeed, beggared the whole human family, reducing every member thereof to the lowest depths of poverty. And the recognition of this fact must necessarily precede any real interest in the gospel of Christ; for the gospel is preached to *the poor*. At one stroke, and by one act of disobedience (Rom. 5:19), man lost *all* his possessions, was stripped even of his proper clothing, and became a naked outcast, dwelling upon the earth only by sufferance, and dependent upon the products of the earth and its creatures even for a covering to hide his shame and nakedness. Nor is there any power in man to recover himself or to regain what he has lost. Therefore, man's true hope lies in the great fact that God has *not left him without a Kinsman;* and it is a *sure* hope to all who lay hold of it by believing what God has said. Why is it that men in general are blind to the truth of their own condition? Why is it that they do not recognize their own poverty, or if they have some light as to that, why do they not perceive their inability to recover, by their own efforts, the lost inheritance? The explanation is that "the god of *this age* hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4). The Gospel, when it is received, lets the light of

God's truth into the darkened minds of men. It turns them "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan" (the prince of darkness) "unto God" (Acts 26:18). But the advancement of human learning does not tend to enlighten men as to their true condition. On the contrary, it carries them into deeper and still deeper darkness, because it leads them farther and farther from the truth. The latter part of the 19th century witnessed the springing up of a new doctrine, according to which man is not a fallen creature at all, but just the contrary: that is to say, this doctrine teaches that he is a *rising* creature, steadily advancing from a primal condition of brutish ignorance and savagery to a glorious consummation, the nature of which, however, is as yet uncertain. This doctrine, which gives the lie direct to the clear statements of both the Old and New Testaments, and to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, was launched upon mankind in the name of unbelieving "science"; but it soon found its way into the theological seminaries and pulpits, where it still is serving the Devil's purpose in "blinding the minds of them that believe not."

To return to the "Goel"; he was for the *poor* Israelite. The rich would have no need of him. So the Redeemer is for the *poor* human being. Those who come to Him must come as *poor*. To the one who says: "I am rich and increased

with goods, and have need of nothing," Christ gives the counsel "to buy of Me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich" (Rev. 3:17, 18). So the preacher of the Gospel must labor to show men their true condition, in order that they may receive God's mercy in providing them with a rich Kinsman-Redeemer.

As to man's slavery to sin and to evil powers, the Scriptures are equally clear. The Lord has declared that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant (*i. e.*, bondslave) of sin" (John 8:34); and since "all have sinned," it follows that all men are born into this state of slavery. But *there is a remedy.* For the Lord Jesus further declared, on the same occasion, that: "The Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:35, 36).

In this passage the Lord was plainly referring to the duty which He, as the Redeemer, had come to discharge, namely, the duty of setting free His people from the bondage or despotism of sin.

In Romans 5:12-21 is an important passage which refers to the dominion, or despotism, of sin and death over all mankind. We read that "death *reigned* from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (verse 14). And again that "Sin hath *reigned* unto death" (verse 21). But in the same passage (continued

on into the sixth chapter), we read also of the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ (His obedience unto death, the death of the cross, Phil. 2:8), whereby redemption was accomplished, and the reign of grace established *"through righteousness";* so that it could be written: "For sin shall *not have dominion* over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

In all the foregoing Scriptures it is clearly seen that the accomplishing of redemption involved the payment of the "great price" required in order to clear away the incumbrances from the forfeited property. Other passages speak even more plainly to this point, showing that God would specially impress upon the minds of His people that the price of their redemption was "the precious blood of Christ." This is vital truth, and we cannot make too much of it, or ponder it too often.

The great type of redemption is the slaying of the paschal lamb in Egypt, and the sprinkling of the blood on the lintel and doorposts of the house. *Grace* provided the lamb, and *faith* applied the blood; for "through *faith* he (Moses) kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Heb. 11:28). Thus Israel became, in type, a "redeemed people."

We have referred to passages in Romans 3:24, 25; and Ephesians 1:7, where redemption

is mentioned as having been accomplished through the blood of Christ. In Colossians also, our deliverance from the dominion of darkness and our translation into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, is referred to; and the words are added: "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, (even) the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12-14). Again, in chapter 2, there is an allusion to the cancellation of the evidences of indebtedness, "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us," which we take to be a reference to the ancient practice, when the obligations of a debtor were fully discharged, to nail up the cancelled evidences of the debt in a public place, as a notice to all that the incumbrance was cleared away. In this sense we understand the words, "having forgiven you *all trespasses;* blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, *nailing it to His cross"* (Col. 2:13, 14). How completely, according to these remarkable words, have the heavy charges and incumbrances once resting upon us, and held against us, been disposed of and taken out of the way! Our Kinsman has *blotted out* the whole account that was contrary to us; He has *taken it out of the way,* and has *nailed it to His cross;* so that there can never be any question as to our liability for a single one of those innumerable "trespasses," or as to the sufficiency of the pay-

ment made by Him to procure the settlement of our heavy account!

In Hebrews 9:11, 12, the Lord's entrance into heaven is referred to in words which show that He could enter there as High Priest only after having paid the price of "eternal redemption" in "His own blood."

In 1 Peter 1:17-21, the fact that we, whom God has begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, have been redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but *with the precious blood of Christ,* is brought forward as a reason why we should pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. Property which has been re-purchased by the Owner at so great a price is exceedingly precious to Him; and our responsibility with reference to it should cause us to spend the period of time until the Owner takes complete possession of the redeemed property, in fear lest He suffer damage through our carelessness.

The last book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, is the book which reveals the yet future redemption *by power* of the inheritance for which the purchase price has been already paid. There is a reference to Redemption and its results in the ascription: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us" (many texts read *freed* us) "from our sins, in" (or with) "His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and

dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."

In this book, we have, in chapter 5, the "new song" of the "redeemed" out of all the kindreds of the earth, to the Lamb that was slain, and that *redeemed* them to God *by His blood.*

This scene is of special interest in connection with our present study because of the bearing it has on the whole subject of Redemption, and the means whereby that is accomplished, and publicly proclaimed, and *proved.*

We would call to mind in this connection Jeremiah's purchase (by God express command) of his near kinsman's field, at a time when the entire land of Israel was about to pass into the possession of the King of Babylon. Hanameel's words to Jeremiah were: "Buy my field, I pray thee, for the *right* of inheritance is thine, and the *redemption* is thine." And this was "by the Word of the Lord" (Jer. 32: 6-8). Accordingly, Jeremiah bought the field, and said:

> "And I subscribed the evidence and *sealed it,* and *took witnesses,* and *weighed him the money* in the balance. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was *sealed* according to the law and the custom, and that which was *open.* And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto

> Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed *the book of the purchase,* before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of purchase, both which is *sealed,* and this evidence which is *open;* and put them in an *earthen vessel,* that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."

The foregoing incident is recorded in direct connection with the strongest and clearest promises of the restoration of Israel (running on to the end of chapter 33); which passage includes, also, the greatest of all promises, that of the New Covenant (31:31-34), embracing the forgiveness of sins, for the ratifying of which the Redeemer's blood was shed (See Matt. 26:28, "the blood of the New Covenant shed for *remission of sins*").

We are persuaded, therefore, that the incident of the purchase of the field of Hanameel (this name signifying "the place of God's favor") is given in order to illustrate the great subject of Redemption, which we are now examining. We would connect with it the Lord's parable in which He, speaking as the "Son of man," and hence as the "near Kinsman," told

of the man who, finding a treasure hid in a field (and He had just previously said "the *field* is the *world*"), went, and for joy thereof, sold *all that he had,* and purchased *that field* (Matt. 13: 44).

This incident also links itself with that recorded in the 4th chapter of Ruth, where Boaz calls upon the nearer kinsman to *buy the field* of the hand of Naomi, and of the "hand of Ruth the Moabitess." This will be referred to later.

In the case recorded in Jer. 32: 6-15, we would notice the importance given to "the *book* of the purchase," containing the *sealed* evidence of the purchase; and also would notice the *open* evidence thereof, and the *earthen vessel* in which they were placed to "continue many days." We take it there is a reference here to the Lord's humanity, assumed by Him in lowliness for the purpose of buying "that field."

We also call attention to the fact that this incident, so fully recorded for our instruction, led Jeremiah to an outburst of praise and adoration to God as the Maker of *heaven and earth,* for Whom "nothing is too hard"; Who is great in counsel and mighty in work, Whose eyes are open upon all the ways of *the sons of men;* Who set signs and wonders in Egypt, and in Israel, and "among other men." This utterance clearly indicates that the incident of buying the field is intended to illustrate Divine

purposes and dealings of a *world-wide character.*

Returning now to the prophetic scene in Revelation 5, we read first of a book sealed with seven seals in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. This we take to be the symbol of the sealed evidence, or "book of purchase," containing the "muniments of title" (so to speak), which vest the lawful ownership of the world in the One Who paid the price for the redemption thereof. Then we read of the proclamation calling for one "worthy" to open the book and to loose the seals thereof. At first, "no man was found worthy"; but presently one of the elders says: "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." And then John sees in the midst of the throne "a Lamb as it had been slain." The Lamb is Christ revealed as the Redeemer; and the visible marks of His having "been slain" are the *open evidences* of the price paid for Redemption! "And *He* came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne." And now we have the clearest proof that the subject of this scene is *Redemption,* and that it marks the time of "the redemption of the purchased possession," by the putting forth of God's mighty power. For "when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the

Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for *Thou wast slain,* and hast *redeemed us to God* by *Thy blood* out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Then follows the breaking of the seals, one by one; the breaking of each being accompanied by an event on earth tending to the dispossession of those who have long abused it, who have filled it with corruption and violence, with destruction and misery, with cruelties and unrighteousness of every sort. The breaking of the last seal leads immediately to the sounding in succession of seven trumpets; and the sounding of the seventh trumpet is hailed as the time when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ," and when God should "destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:15-18).

XIII

THE SON OF MAN

THE facts we have thus gathered in regard to the nature of Redemption, and the steps by which it is accomplished, give special significance to the title, "Son of Man," by which our Lord almost invariably described Himself when on earth, and also when He referred to His coming again to take possession of the purchased inheritance. We have pointed out that, according to law, the Redeemer must be *near of kin* to those whom he succors. In fact, the word "redeemer" *means* "kinsman," as we have seen. Therefore, there is a world of meaning in the fact that the Lord, when He came among men, treading the dust of the world He had made, did not refer to Himself as Son of Abraham, or as Son of David, but as Son of *Man,* thus declaring, in effect, that He had put Himself, by being "made of woman," in such relations of kinship to all mankind that He is qualified, according to the requirements of the law, to "do the part of the kinsman" to any member of the human family who needs and will accept the services of a wealthy and mighty Redeemer.

This does not, of course, imply that there is any kinship whatever between the Lord (Who "knew no sin" and in Whom "is no sin") and the corrupt children of men; but merely that, having humbled Himself to be made the Son of man, taking "the likeness of sinful flesh," He became thereby *qualified to redeem men* of all kindreds, nations, tongues and tribes. Why was it necessary for the salvation of men that He Himself should become a man? One sufficient reason is that His fore-ordained work was that of *Redemption,* both of the possessions and of the persons of men—freeing their possessions from forfeiture and their persons from slavery; and since the law required that the redeemer be near of kin to those succored by him, and since Christ came to fulfil (not to destroy) the law, and to magnify and make it honorable, He *needs must* become the Kinsman of the perishing race of Adam.

These facts illuminate such Scriptures as Galatians 3:13, and 4:4, 5. The former reads thus: "Christ hath *redeemed us* from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

This speaks of the curse of the law resting upon us in the same manner as an incumbrance rests upon mortgaged property, which incumbrance the redeemer must assume and discharge in its entirety ere the property can be released.

The passage in chap. 4:4, 5, reads thus: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to *redeem them* that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." This passage emphasizes the fact of kinship assumed by the Lord towards the whole human family, in that He was "made of a woman." That fact would have little or no significance but for the provisions of the law "concerning redeeming and concerning changing" (Ruth 4:7). But, seen in the light of those provisions of the law of God, we perceive the wondrous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in thus assuming, for our sakes, the position of a near kinsman.

For, be it noted, the law, as it operated ordinarily, imposed the obligations of redemption upon those only who were already kinsmen by nature. But the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, was *not a kinsman by nature.* No *legal* obligation to redeem rested upon Him. It was of *grace alone* that He placed Himself in a position where He became obligated to "do the part of a kinsman" to all who would seek Him in their need, and who would accept by faith the service which He offers to perform for "all men everywhere."

There is another circumstance noted in the book of Ruth which, though seemingly of slight importance, yet illustrates truth of deep inter-

est. We refer now to the fact that Boaz was not the *next* of kin, but as Naomi said to Ruth, "The man is *near* of kin unto us, *one of* our next kinsmen" (2:20). And Boaz, in acknowledging his own kinship to these poverty-stricken widows, said: "And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman; howbeit there is a kinsman *nearer than I*" (3:12). Whom does that *nearer kinsman represent?* This is an interesting point into which we purpose to inquire in a later chapter.

Thus far we have regarded Redemption from the point of view of man's desperate and hopeless condition. But there is another side of it, which the Scriptures present to our view, and which may be briefly set forth by saying that the purchased possession becomes the property of the redeemer. As it is expressed in the prayer of David: "And what nation in the earth is like Thy people, even like Israel, whom God went *to redeem for a people unto Himself?*" (2 Sam. 7:23).

Likewise God had claimed the firstborn of every Israelite as His own. Hence the parent was compelled to "redeem," that is, to *buy back from God,* his firstborn son (Ex. 13:13-15). But, later on, God exchanged His rights in the firstborn, relinquishing His claim to them, and taking in exchange the sons of Levi. And from the account of the transaction of exchanging the firstborn for the Levites, we may learn how

very particular God is in regard to all that concerns redemption. For when the firstborn and the Levites were numbered it was found that there were 273 more of the former than of the latter. Hence, in making the exchange, God was not getting, by 273 persons, as many as He was giving up. So He required that the 273 of the firstborn which were more than the Levites be "redeemed," saying to Moses: "And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is *to be redeemed,* unto Aaron and to his sons. And Moses took the *redemption money* of them that were over and above them that were *redeemed* by the Levites: of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: and Moses gave the money of them that *were redeemed* unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses."

This view of Redemption (that is, God's side of it) is also presented to us in Titus 2:11-14, where, in a passage speaking of "the *grace of God* which bringeth salvation to all men" (R. V.), it is declared of our Saviour Jesus Christ, that He "gave Himself for us, that He might *redeem us from all iniquity,* and *purify unto Himself a peculiar people,*" that is to say, a people for *His very own.* Thus we have become "His very own" by His giving Himself for us,

to be a people for Himself, Who "having loved *His own* that were in the world, loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

We have, in the preceding chapter, viewed Redemption as it will be consummated in the coming age, and as described in the last book of the Bible; and we will now conclude our present chapter by viewing it as presented in what is generally regarded as the oldest book of the Bible, the book of Job.

In the first part of chapter 19 Job describes his desperate condition (mistakenly charging it to God's arbitrary action), saying, for example in verses 9 and 10: "He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath *destroyed me* on every side, and I am *gone*: and mine hope hath He removed like a tree."

But just here, when overwhelmed with the sense of his utterly hopeless state, Job obtains that wonderful vision of *the Kinsman.* He begins this burst of inspiration by saying: "Oh, that my words were now written! Oh that they were *printed in a book!* That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!" This desire of Job has been granted to an extent he could not possibly have dreamed of. His words *are* written. They *are* printed in a book, even in God's own Book, whence they have spoken comfort to many millions. They have been preserved even more enduringly than

if they had been chiseled deeply in the hardest rock, and the letters filled in with lead, as he wished. And what were the words to which Job attached such great importance? They were these:

> "For I know that my Redeemer *(i. e., Kinsman,* or *Goel)* liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

Some portions of this remarkable passage have given trouble to the translators; but this much is clear beyond all question, namely, that although Job's plight was desperate in the extreme, and though he was altogether mistaken as to the purpose of God's dealings with him—not having yet "seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" (Jam. 5:11)—nevertheless Job was given clearly to see that he had, *in the Lord Himself, a Redeemer;* and to see further that through *His redeeming work,* though Job's own mortal body might be destroyed, yet, in his flesh he should see God, Whom his own eyes should behold.

It is truly a wonderful thing that to Job should have been revealed, in the time of his deepest distress, the fact that he was "not left without

a Kinsman," One Who *liveth,* and is abundantly able "to do the part of a kinsman."

The words "in *my* flesh shall I see God" are evidently a reference to the grand truth of "God manifest in the flesh"—"the Word made flesh" —"Immanuel." Job was divinely enlightened to expect that he would *see God* in his—that is, Job's—own flesh. And this view of the meaning is in harmony also with the significance of the word "Redeemer," that is, one *near of kin.*

In the margin the words "though after my skin," etc., are altered as follows: "After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed"—which seems a preferable translation. Another reading of the words, "though my reins be consumed within me," gives "exhausted are the deepest desires of my bosom."

The thought of the Lord as the Kinsman was not uncommon to spiritual men of old; as David in Psalm 19, having in view the cleansing of his secret faults and deliverance from the "dominion" of presumptuous sins, addresses the Lord as "My Rock and my *Redeemer*"—(Kinsman). See also Isaiah 43:14; 44:6; 54:5.

If, therefore, we have but in a very small measure apprehended the truth connected with the subject of the Redeemer, we will indeed say, with deepest thankfulness: "Blessed be the Lord, Who hath not left us without a Kinsman!"

XIV

"THE PART OF A KINSMAN"

IN chapter 3, we find Naomi, as one having knowledge of the law of the Lord, instructing Ruth how to proceed in order to obtain the benefit of those portions of the law which relate to "the part of a kinsman" (see verse 13); and here, as elsewhere in the narrative, Ruth shows herself teachable and submissive to the one in whose company God had placed her, and who was able to show her His ways.

Naomi's instructions to Ruth, given in this chapter, bring into view that *third* obligation of the Goel, to which we have made allusion, but which has yet to be described. We have shown that, under the law of the kinsman, the latter was obligated to restore the forfeited inheritance to his impoverished relative, and also, in case he had sold himself into slavery, to procure his release and set him free. But, besides these two obligations, there was a third which, because of the spiritual lessons it teaches and the truth it illustrates, is even more important, and which therefore claims our best attention.

This third duty which the law imposed upon the Goel, became binding upon him in case his relative's lineage had been cut off *by death,*

thus blotting out his *name* and his *house* in Israel. This blotting out of the name through the extinction of the family, the Israelites were taught to regard as a dire calamity; for their thought was that each individual's existence continued in the existence of his house. Thus the descendants of Jacob were "Jacob," and the descendants of Judah were "Judah," and so on. Therefore, the death of a man without leaving descendants of his own name was regarded in Israel as being both a disaster and a disgrace. Accordingly, in order to meet this extreme case, God laid a *special responsibility* upon the kinsman-redeemer; and we gather that the chief lesson taught by this feature of God's wonderful law is that *God is greater than death,* that He is ever the God of Abraham "Who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were," and that *after death has done its worst,* God can bring back the dead again, and place them, more securely than ever, "in the lot of their inheritance." God's promise to Daniel holds good for all who ever trusted in the God of Daniel. For to that man greatly beloved God said: "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt *rest* and shalt *stand in thy lot* in the end of the days" (Dan. 12:13).

If we look in a comprehensive way at the work which the Son of God undertook when He stooped to assume the relation of near Kinsman,

or Redeemer, to the perishing human race, we can readily see that it embraced, indeed, individual salvation (that is, deliverance of *persons* and restoration of *goods*), for all who trust in Him; but that it also contemplated, as it were, the recovery and restoration of man's inheritance (the earth) and the *bringing back* of the human family itself *from the dead,* and the placing of that family, fully restored in every way from the effects of sin and death, *upon their inheritance, to enjoy it forever!*

This, of course, does not in the least imply or even remotely suggest the *universal restoration* of mankind; for nothing is clearer than that, while the benefits of Christ's work are freely offered to all men without distinction, yet those benefits are to be received and enjoyed *only by faith.* This limitation, however, of God's salvation to those who *repent* and *believe on His Son,* does not diminish the grandeur and glory of the fact that the work of the Redeemer will result in a new creation—new heavens and a new earth—wherein "the nations of *them that are saved* shall walk in the light" of the holy city, (the Lamb Himself being the Light thereof), and wherein "the tabernacle of God shall be *with men,* and He will *dwell with them;* and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3, 23, 24). "These words are true and faithful."

Keeping these facts in mind, we shall see how wonderfully they are illustrated by that special provision of the law of the kinsman, whereof Ruth, following Naomi instructions, now sought the benefit. Unless we clearly understand that particular part of law under which Ruth acted, and know its purpose, we might regard Ruth's procedure as (to say the least) unusual and unconventional, if not indelicate and immodest. But there is no need whatever to apologize for Ruth's behaviour, since she was acting according to the directions given her by a mother in Israel who knew the law of God. Moreover, it is very clear from all that is recorded of that young woman that she was of irreproachable life and reputation. Boaz could say of and to her: "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest; for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman" (3:11).

What then was it that Ruth required of Boaz, as her Goel? For answer to this question, we turn to Deuteronomy 25:5, 6:

> "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother" (or *next kinsman*) "unto her. And it shall be that the firstborn which she beareth shall

succeed *in the name* of his brother, that *his name* be not put out of Israel."

We call particular attention to the fact that the firstborn child of the marriage which the law here provides for was to be reckoned as *the child of the dead man;* and that the great purpose of this was that "*his name* be not put out of Israel." We know that, according to the usage of Scripture, the *name* is identified with the *person;* and thus we see God's purpose to be that the name of the Israelite who died *without issue* was *not to be extinguished;* but that God Himself should come in as it were *in a special way,* "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (Ruth 4:10).

That God attached great importance to this provision of His law (which was in operation among the children of Israel long before the law of Sinai was given) is very clear from the Scriptures. And nowhere was this particular statute so vital as in the house of Judah; because *through that house ran the genealogical line which was to lead to David and to Christ.* Once before, that life-line had been threatened with extinction—when Judah's eldest son was slain for his wickedness, and died leaving no offspring, and when his brother refused to do the part of a "goel" in raising up seed to his dead brother by marrying his widow (Gen. 38:7-11). From the record we have of this incident it appears that it was very repugnant to the natural

heart of an Israelite to part with a child of his own, and to give it to his dead kinsman to build up the latter's house. Onan refused to do the part of the "goel" because "he knew that the seed would *not be his.*" This was evil in the sight of the Lord; "wherefore He slew him also." It was "a sin unto death" (1 Jno. 5:16).

When, therefore, the time came for the incorporation of this particular statute into the law of Moses, God attached to it a proviso whereby the man who should refuse to do the kinsman's part, in this respect, should be stigmatized and disgraced; and whereby the shame and disgrace should attach permanently to that man's house. Thus we read, following the passage last quoted above:

> "And if the man like not to take his brother's".... (or, next kinsman's—marg.)—"wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother *a name* in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother" (or, the part of a kinsman).
>
> "Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be

called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."

This will teach us, among other things, the great importance which God gave to this feature of His law.

With these facts in mind we can readily understand Naomi's instructions to Ruth, in pursuance of which she laid herself down at the feet of Boaz, while the latter slept, and upon his awaking, addressed to him these words: "I am Ruth, thine handmaid; spread thy skirt over thine handmaid; for *thou art one that hath the right to redeem*" (3:9, marg.).

Boaz had won Ruth's confidence by his graciousness and friendly interest in her. He had "comforted" her, and spoken "to her heart" (2:13, marg.). And now she manifests her unlimited trust in him that he will be faithful to the obligation of a kinsman, that he will, without fail, "perform the part of a kinsman" to the fullest extent of the law.

The beautiful significance of the words, "spread thy skirt over thine handmaid," is seen from Ezekiel 16:8, where the Lord speaks of His relations with Israel under the figure of a betrothal and marriage. In that passage He says, "And I spread my skirt over thee," thus, in figurative language, indicating the promise and pledge of protection which a man gives to the woman he espouses. That is what Ruth, in her perfect trust, sought of Boaz; and we

should not fail to notice that her confidence had a solid foundation; for it rested upon the law of the Lord, and upon the belief that Boaz, being a man of God, would fulfil that law in every particular.

Consider the position in which, because of this confidence in the law and in the man, she placed herself! So complete was her committal of herself that she hesitated not to put herself in such a situation as would have brought upon her, had Boaz proved untrustworthy, consequences far worse than death—the loss of honour and reputation. She freely ventured *all* upon his faithfulness and godliness. Had her confidence been in vain, then we might say that she would have been of all persons the most miserable.

And is not this an illustration of the trust which those who truly believe in the risen Christ repose in Him? Have they not ventured *everything,* for time and for eternity, upon His faithfulness, so that, should He fail (were such a thing even supposable) to do the part of a Kinsman, they would be of all men the most miserable? As it is written: "And if Christ be not raised, *your faith is vain,* ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Moreover, Ruth, by her act of complete abandonment to her Goel—putting at stake what was

more to a virtuous woman than her existence —placed *him* in a position where he was bound to fulfil the law in doing the kinsman's part, or else himself be proved faithless. And so we may, with all reverence, say that the Lord Jesus, our rich and mighty Goel, would have us put Him fully to the proof, casting ourselves wholly upon Him, and counting with implicit confidence upon Him to fulfil, in every particular and in every detail, the kinsman's part.

The relationship with Boaz into which Ruth was finally brought through his faithfulness in fulfilling the law of God, and through his condescension towards the humble stranger, was a *permanent* relationship. She came at last into an *abiding* union with the rich and mighty "Goel" who, in the past years of her life, had been wholly unknown to her. It was, moreover, a relationship in which every possible wish and longing of her heart was fully satisfied, leaving nothing to be desired or hoped for. She came into the enjoyment of the blessing of Naphtali, to whom was given the promise that he should be "*satisfied* with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord" (Deut. 33: 23). Thus, at last, she reaches a state of blessedness corresponding with her own name— "*Satisfied.*"

Such also is the relationship with Christ, our great and wealthy Kinsman, into which every believing sinner is brought, through His faith-

fulness in fulfilling to the letter the requirements of God's holy law, "concerning redeeming." It is a relationship which endures eternally. They who, by sovereign grace are "in Christ Jesus," are in Him *forever*. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? * * Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8: 35, 37).

Nor is there anything beyond or above that supreme sphere of blessing into which we, the once alien enemies and outcasts, have now been brought. For "*now* are we the sons of God"; and although "it doth not yet *appear* what we shall be," nevertheless we know that, in the soon coming day of redemption of the purchased possession, "when He shall appear, we shall be *like Him;* for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Every sinner who has redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, can say: "As for me, I will behold Thy Face in righteousness; I shall be SATISFIED when I awake with Thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15).

XV

HOW RUTH FOUND REST

The third chapter of Ruth begins with these words: "Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not *seek rest* for thee, that it may be well with thee?" The "rest" which Naomi had in view for Ruth was what she had spoken of to her two daughters-in-law, when they were leaving Moab; that is to say, "rest, each of you in the house of her husband." The rest which a woman has the right to expect in the house of her husband is the complete relief from all care, anxiety, and responsibility concerning her future support and protection. It means the settlement of *all the problems of life.* She commits herself to one who, as she implicitly believes, is both able and willing to assume all the burdens of the future home and family. Therefore, the betrothal of a woman to the man she loves and trusts furnishes a beautiful and appropriate illustration of the relation with the Lord Jesus Christ into which every believer is brought.

This is the highest, tenderest, and holiest aspect of *personal salvation.* It is a wonderful thing to be *saved by* Christ, to be cleansed by His blood, to share His risen life and to be

given access through Him to the Father. But it is a thing even more wonderful and blessed to have *union with* Christ. And this is what is suggested by the marriage of Ruth with Boaz.

To the believers at Corinth, Paul wrote that he was jealous over them with godly jealousy: "For," said he, "I have espoused you to one husband; that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). And there are other passages of Scripture which use the figure of the betrothal and marriage to illustrate the relation of the Lord Jesus toward those whom He saves and purifies unto Himself (Tit. 2:14).

From this we may learn that the Lord assumes toward His beloved people (1) the duty of *protection and support,* to guard them from danger and meet all their needs; (2) the responsibility of *headship,* to give them directions for their conduct and their service in all matters pertaining to His interests; and (3) the responsibility to impart power for *fruitfulness.* For these are the duties and responsibilities which a husband should assume and faithfully discharge.

In Ruth we see one who has had one marriage which proved *unfruitful;* and now she, as a widow, becomes espoused to one who, as we have seen, clearly represents *Christ risen from the dead,* one who is willing and able to perform fully the part of a kinsman, *though he was not by nature her kinsman at all.* It is easy to see

in this situation a close parallel to that described by Paul in Romans 7:1-4:

> "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.
>
> "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him Who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

The point here which we wish to emphasize is that to live in union with "Him Who is raised from the dead," results in "fruit *unto God*"; whereas the result of our former manner of life, even though it be the "blameless" life of that Pharisee of the Pharisees, Saul of Tarsus, was "fruit *unto death*" (Rom. 7:5). What that previous marriage represents will be looked into a little later; but we have here the encouraging suggestion of a *fruitful* union with Him Who stooped to make Himself our Kinsman, in order that He might be qualified to as-

sume this great responsibility. What is here suggested is the relation of the Vine and the branches: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me" (or severed from *Me,* marg.) "ye can do" (*i. e. produce*) "nothing" (John 15:5).

Keeping this thought in mind, we turn now to the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, where we find some remarkable words addressed to one who was evidently a childless widow. It is clear that this chapter contains foreshadowings of wonderful things; and it is well worth our while to make an effort to trace them out. What specially challenges our attention and connects this passage directly with our present subject is the fact that *the Lord Himself* here assumes the title of Kinsman (*i. e.,* "Redeemer") towards *one who is represented as a childless widow.* To her are spoken these words of comfort:

> "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God."

And again in verse 8, the Lord calls Himself, "Thy Redeemer," which signifies primarily "thy *next Kinsman.*"

The words of the entire passage foretell for that desolate one, (who had tasted bitterness of spirit in the shame of her youth and the reproach of her widowhood), a marvellously fruitful marriage, so much so as to demand a great enlargement of the family premises—a marriage that should result also in spreading the knowledge of God to "the whole earth." And since the Lord Himself is the Husband, the children were to be the children of God, who should be brought into a place of everlasting favor, and protected by an eternal "covenant of peace" (vv. 9 and 10).

There can be no doubt as to who these "children" are. The passage gives a clear answer to the question of chapter 49: 20, 21:

> "The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?"

Beyond all doubt, the children foreseen in this prophecy are those which God has now begotten unto Himself by the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from the dead. The significance of the prophecy becomes quite evident when it is observed that it follows immediately upon (being really a connected part of) the description (in chapter 53) of the sufferings and death and resurrection of the Kinsman-Redeemer. That wondrous passage should be read slowly and thoughtfully with the main facts of Redemption in mind, that is to say, in the light of *the obligations which the law of God laid upon the Kinsman.* There we see, on the one hand, our heavy liabilities, the weight of which would have pressed us down to the pit of ruin under an eternal load of misery and woe—our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions, our chastisements, our iniquities. Such were the liabilities *He* assumed, the weighty encumbrances *He* undertook to discharge! Who can estimate them? Then we see the hand of God laying the entire load upon Him; for this is the requirement of that holy and righteous law of God which He came—not to destroy, but—*to fulfil.* And "thus it *behooved Christ*" (*i. e.,* was *necessary* for Him) "to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day," to the end that "repentance and remission of sins might be preached, in His Name, among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*" (Luke 24:46, 47).

The *necessities* of the case, therefore, required that He should pay *with His life* the ransom price for the forfeited property and

persons of those to whom He made Himself, in wondrous grace and condescension, the Next of Kin. But how, then, shall the extinguished "house" be rebuilt, if the Builder of the house be "cut off out of the land of the living," leaving no "generation"? This is the significance of the question in Isaiah 53:8: "Who shall declare His generation? For He was *cut off* out of the land of the living." Will not *His* death be the end of everything? Yes, surely, but for the God "Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which *be not* as though they *were.*" What was seemingly brought to an end at the Cross and buried in the rich man's new tomb, sealed with the authority of Cæsar, and guarded by the military power of the Roman Empire, was the *whole house of Abraham,* and the *house of Israel,* and the *house of David,* yes, and *the house of man,* and *the House of God!* For *all depended upon Him,* whether for life or death, Who, in God's mighty plan of Redemption, came into the world as Son of David, Son of Abraham, and Son of man, *both to die* and *to live again.*

The answer to that great question, "Who shall declare *His* generation," Who was "cut off" without seed, comes quickly. For a wonderful change occurs in the passage at verse 10. We find His death in verse 8—"cut off out of the land of the living"—and His burial in verse 9; for He died for our sins ("the transgression

of My people"), according to the Scriptures, and *was buried.* But in verse 10 are the words: "He shall *see His seed,* He shall *prolong His days,* and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper *in His hand.*"

These three distinct statements declare (1) resurrection to endless days, (2) the building up of the family of God, and (3) the accomplishment, by His hand, of all the vast and mighty purposes of God—"*the pleasure* of the LORD." In other words, we have in this sentence, the promise of *redemption fully accomplished,* by One Who, for the accomplishment thereof, was to be "cut off out of the land of the living."

Particularly do we find, in this passage, the foretelling of the New Covenant, under which believing sinners are justified from all things, and are given an Intercessor who should plead for them in "the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:25). For it is easy to understand and to apply the words: "By His knowledge shall my Righteous Servant *justify many;* for He shall bear *their iniquities*....And He bare the *sin of many,* and *made intercession* for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:11, 12).

This brings us to chapter 54, where we have visions of the many "children of the desolate," whose seed are to "inherit *the Gentiles,*" and of the pleasure of the Lord prospering wonderfully in His (Christ's) hand. We find there the promise, "My kindness shall not depart from

thee, neither shall the *covenant of My peace* be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee" (v. 10). Also, this unmistakable promise of the New Covenant: "And *all thy children* shall be taught *of the LORD;* and great shall be *the peace of thy children*" (v. 13). And the concluding words of the chapter are very clear and blessedly significant:

> "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."

Here is the promise of perfect security, of "no condemnation," of an incorruptible heritage, and of God's own enduring righteousness, freely bestowed upon those who receive the blessings of the New Covenant.

Then follows, in proper order, the proclamation of the Gospel, with its call: "Ho! everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money," leading on to the Millennial scene at the end of chapter 55. But we do not follow this line any further, at present, because to do so would take us away from our immediate subject. We hope, if the Lord will, to present something at another time on the subject of "the sure mercies of David" (Is. 55:3).

XVI

THE MOTHER OF US ALL
(Gal. 4:26)

THE meaning and application of Isaiah 54—the desolate and childless widow becoming the joyful mother of children—are made clear by the Apostle Paul's reference thereto in Galatians 4:19-31. In that remarkable passage are found a series of contrasts in pairs: there are the two wives of Abraham, the two families, the two mountains, the two covenants, and the two cities; and it is specially to be noticed that Abraham is the starting point for *both the contrasted orders of things.* There are deep and vital lessons to be traced out in this Scripture; but that we must also defer to another time, if the Lord will. What is directly to our present purpose is that the City which has the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God, is directly connected with Abraham, being indeed the city for which Abraham was looking (Heb. 11:10); and that that same city is expressly declared to be the "Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and which is *the mother of us all.*"

The passage in Galatians 4 also presents Sarah as a figure of the "barren woman" re-

ferred to in Isaiah 54,—and it tells us that "these are the two covenants," whereof one, represented by Hagar, who was the first *mother* but not the first *wife,* and whose children were not the *promised* seed of Abraham, was the old covenant, ratified at Mount Sinai. It follows that the other, represented by Sarah, is the New Covenant, ratified by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and carried out by Him in resurrection as Head over the House of God. As the Apostle says: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are *the children of promise*" (Gal. 4:26-28).

The "many more children" here spoken of are the "many sons," of Heb. 2:10, whom God is bringing unto glory, where the heavenly city is. They are the "many brethren," of Rom. 8:29, whom God is conforming to the image of His own Son. They are the true "Israel" that was to come out of Abraham and his wife (who were "as good as dead"), and who are indeed called, in Galatians 6:16, "the Israel *of God.*"

Thus, without attempting to trace the details of the prophetic picture displayed before our eyes in Isaiah 54, we can clearly see in it the

outlines of God's great purpose, namely, to clear away from the inheritance of man, through the mighty Kinsman's work, all the great incumbrances that rested upon it, and also "to raise up the name of the dead" upon the restored inheritance.

Who, then, is the once desolate woman, forsaken indeed for a small moment, but to be gathered with everlasting mercies, and whose seed was to inherit the Gentiles? Our thought is that, under this figure, is described the faithful believing remnant of Israel which turned to the Lord when He came among them. There are various references in Isaiah and the later prophets to this "remnant" which is sometimes called "Zion" and "Jerusalem," but more definitely "the virgin *daughter* of Zion" (as in Isa. 10:24, 32; 52:1, 2; 66:8; Zeph. 3:14; Zech. 2:10, and 9:9).

These expressions trace a connection between the earthly Jerusalem (or earthly Zion), and the heavenly Jerusalem (or heavenly Zion). They are among many indications, found in the Scriptures, to the effect that there is no break between the Old and New Testaments in the line of God's operations along which He is accomplishing His mighty purposes; but that there is unbroken continuity of working, even where it seems as if the thread of His dealings with the world were completely severed.

In several Scriptures God refers to His relationship with Israel as a betrothal and marriage (see for example Isaiah 50:1, Jeremiah 2:2, Ezekiel 16:8, 23:3; Hosea 2:15, etc.); and it is quite evident that Israel, or Jerusalem —which often stands for Israel in figurative passages like this—is the one addressed in Isaiah 54. But the first marriage was unfruitful; and the "Israel" of Christ's day was in a barren, unfruitful condition, seemingly incapable of producing anything for God, and becoming ever less and less likely to bear children unto Him. (See the parable of the unfruitful fig tree planted in the vineyard, Luke 13:6-9).

But there was, in the midst of the decay, corruption and spiritual deadness of Israel, a believing remnant, whose hearts were contrite, and receptive to His Word. These repented under the preaching of John the Baptist, and were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins. That believing remnant is mentioned in many prophetic Scriptures, which those who wish to pursue the subject in detail should consult.*

Thus, in Isaiah 1:9, we read, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a *very small remnant,* we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Also, in Isaiah 37:31, 32, we have this promise: "And *the remnant* that is escaped of the house of

*See Isa. 10:20-22; 11:11; 37:31, 32; Ezek. 6:8; Joel 2:32; Mic. 2:12; Zeph. 2:7, 9; Zech. 8:11, 12.

Judah shall again take root downward, and *bear fruit upward*: for out of Jerusalem shall go forth *a remnant,* and they that escape out of Mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this."

The Apostle Paul clearly identifies the remnant spoken of by Isaiah as being the little company of Israelites who received Christ when He came to them. This was the true "Israel," the "*remnant* according to the election of grace," as appears by Romans 9:6; 29 and 11:5.

Moreover, the prophet Joel, in foretelling this present age, wherein "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:32 and Rom. 10:13), and in announcing that the age should begin by the pouring out of the Spirit of God, which occurred on the day of Pentecost, said:

> "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in *Mount Zion* and *in Jerusalem* shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in *the remnant whom the Lord shall call*" (Joel 2:32).

This "remnant" through whom was to come "deliverance," was composed, as already stated, of those that responded to the preaching of John, who had been sent to "make ready a people *prepared* for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). They were "prepared" as a bride for a bridegroom; for John the Baptist himself spoke of

them under that figure, as recorded in John 3: 26-29, where we read that when John's disciples reported, with evident regret and concern, that all men were coming to Christ, John replied, saying: "He that *hath the bride*" (referring evidently to the believing remnant who received Christ) "is the Bridegroom" (John 3:29). Thus, the Lord's coming to this little company prepared through the ministry of John the Baptist, and His acceptance by them, is spoken of as a *marriage.*

At this point the prophecy found in Hosea 2:14-23 seems to apply. There are so many things of deep interest in that remarkable passage that we could not attempt to unfold it in this brief study. But we would call attention to the words (following a reference in verses 1 and 2 to God's former relations with Israel as a Husband with a wife): "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her *into the wilderness*" (it was into the wilderness that the remnant went out to meet Christ in response to the preaching of John, who was "the voice of one crying *in the wilderness,*") "and speak *to her heart*" (marg. as in Ruth 2:13),.... "and she shall sing as in the days of her youth"; (cf. Isa. 54:1, "sing, O barren"!)...."and I will betroth thee unto Me forever," etc.

It should also be noticed that the concluding words of the passage—"and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people;

and they shall say, Thou art my God''—are quoted by Paul in Romans 9:26, and are said to be fulfilled *in this present dispensation.*

When the Lord Jesus was about to leave the disciples, who had continued faithfully in His company, He likened their approaching sorrow to that of a woman in birth-pangs, saying:

> ''Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.''

The consolation He then offered to them was that the sorrows of His disciples would be fruitful; for He was looking forward to the children who were soon to be born into the family of God. This agrees with the words of Isaiah 66:8: ''Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be *born at once?* For, *as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children.''*

And so it was indeed; for on the day of Pentecost there was born a ''nation'' so to speak (see 1 Pet. 2:9), about 3,000 persons

being born again; and these constituted the beginnings of the family of God. These "children" were "all righteous"; for their sins were all forgiven and put away; they entered into the covenant of God's everlasting "peace" (for being justified by faith they had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ); and, moreover, the sorrow of Christ's little remnant which had been faithful to Him was immediately turned into joy; so that they could rejoice even that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.

Looking closely at the words of Isaiah 54: 1-7, in the light of Paul's reference thereto in Galatians 4, we may clearly see that Sarah is here presented as a type of that spiritual Jerusalem (or Zion) which is called "the mother of us all"; just as, in Romans 4:17 we find the corresponding expression concerning Abraham "who is the father of us all." Clearly then it is that spiritual family called "the household of faith" and the "Israel of God," that is brought into view in this wonderful prophetic passage. And this is confirmed by the fact that in the context we find the words, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you; for I called *him alone,* and blessed him, and increased him" (Isa. 51:2). God called Abraham *alone.* Hence all the people of God are of the house and lineage of Abraham. But, more than that they all, "as Isaac was, are the chil-

dren of *promise"*; or to express it figuratively, all have Sarah for their mother, not Hagar.

Sarah then was the barren and desolate one, whose life had been spent without bringing forth a child, but to whom, after a lifetime of reproach, Isaac (*i. e.,* "Laughter") was given; so that she could say: "God hath made me *to laugh,* so that *all that hear* will laugh with me" (Gen. 21:6). Those who "hear" are the ones who share the great joy of that once barren and forsaken one (See Isa. 55:3). Furthermore, there are two conspicuous features of Sarah's life that are recalled in verse 4, the "shame" of youth (her barrenness), and the "reproach" of her widowhood—for there was a period during which she was truly a widow, inasmuch as Hagar had the husband who was properly Sarah's. And finally, as in the prophecy, so likewise Sarah's shame and reproach were removed, and, after a whole lifetime of sterility, she became the mother of a great nation and of Kings and priests, through the putting forth of God's mighty power in a special way to bring forth life from the dead.

All these things have remarkable correspondences in the bringing forth out of barren and desolate Israel after centuries of sterility, or more accurately out of the little "remnant" thereof "that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Lu. 2:38), the "many sons" whom God is now "bringing unto glory."

We think, therefore, that we can clearly trace the fulfilment of Isaiah 54 in the events which happened immediately after the Lord's resurrection and His ascension into heaven, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. And this fully accounts for the fact, otherwise exceedingly difficult to explain, that the remarkable words of promise to the barren and desolate woman are placed immediately after the clearest of all the prophetic descriptions (that given in Isaiah 53) of the great Kinsman's sufferings, death and resurrection.

How very clear it is, in the light of these wonderful Scriptures, that *He died* to pay the ransom-price, and that *He lives* as a *Man* in resurrection power, both to restore and also to enjoy with His redeemed co-heirs, the once forfeited inheritance! Thus may we understand such words as these:

> "Much more then, being now justified *by His blood,* we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God *by the death of His Son,* much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved *by His life*" (Rom. 5:9, 10).

XVII

THE NEARER KINSMAN

"And behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here" (RUTH 4:1).

BOAZ was ready, at whatever cost to himself, to perform the part of a kinsman to that "stranger" from the land of Moab, though naturally she would have been to him, and to any Israelite, an object of aversion. But there arose an obstacle in the way of his doing the kinsman's part, in that there was a kinsman *more nearly related than he,* to the family of Elimelech.

Boaz had made this fact known to Ruth, saying:

> "And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman; howbeit there is *a kinsman nearer than I.* Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee *the part of a kinsman,* well; let *him* do the kinsman's part. But if *he* will not do the kinsman's part, *then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee,* as the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning" (3:12, 13).

There has been no little uncertainty and contrariety of opinion as to whom this nearer kins-

man should be taken to represent. But we think it is not difficult to decide that interesting point with a reasonable degree of certainty. For—in the figurative sense in which we are taking this narrative (and in which it has been frequently taken before), to illustrate the great spiritual truth of Redemption—we sinners of Adam's race have one who corresponds to the nearer kinsman referred to by Boaz; yet somehow the point seems to have been missed by those who have heretofore unfolded, for the edification of the Lord's people, some of the rich contents of the book of Ruth.

The nearer kinsman is usually taken to represent *the Law,* it being said that the Law failed to redeem men, and otherwise failed to accomplish God's purposes; wherefore it became necessary that Christ should come to accomplish as man's Kinsman-Redeemer "what the law could not do" (Rom. 8:3). And we are pointed to such texts as Galatians 3:21, which declares that: "If there had been *a law* given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by *the law.*"

It is true that the Law did not accomplish those purposes of God for which, in the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, "made *under* law," the chief purpose being "to *redeem* them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption," or place of sons in God's family (Gal. 4:5, 6). But the law *was not intended to*

accomplish those purposes; and the failure was not that of the law, but that of *man* when tested *by* the law.

Furthermore, the Law was not made, in any sense whatever, the *kinsman* of the human race. There was no family-relationship at all between the Law and the perishing family of Adam. The Law assumed no obligations of any sort towards men. It simply tested them according to what God is, and according to what He requires of men; and having done that, it could only *condemn* them. In fact it is not possible that the Law could be related to men in any such manner as to answer to the figure of a kinsman. Nor is it possible that the Law of God could have done "the part of a kinsman" for man in his condition of poverty, bondage and death. It was the Law which laid the obligations of redemption *upon* the kinsman, defining what he should do for his poverty-stricken relation. How then could the Law itself *be* that kinsman whose obligations it prescribed?

The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world as a babe, born of a woman, and Himself truly Man. Thus He became in a real practical sense, the *near kinsman.* Were the children "partakers of flesh and blood?" Then it was necessary that He himself *likewise* should take part of the same (Heb. 2:14); in order that He might have that relationship which the Redeemer must have according to the Law. Obviously,

the Law was not made in any sense whatever a partaker of flesh and blood, so that it could bear the heavy penalty of our sins and clear away—by making full payment therefor—the burdensome incumbrances which had accumulated upon the inheritance. It is clear that a consistent interpretation of our Scripture demands a kinsman of "flesh and blood" *more nearly related to us* than Jesus, the Son of man. And "such a one" (Ruth 4:1) is not hard to find. Indeed we do not see how he could have been missed by so many.

Furthermore, according to the law, the Israelite who should refuse to do the kinsman's part in the vital matter of building up his brother's house by taking the brother's widow to wife, was to have his shoe loosed from off his foot (which meant degradation); and furthermore the widow whom he refused, was to spit in his face; and he was to be known thenceforth in Israel by a title of disgrace. It requires but a moment's consideration to make clear to us that these judgments upon the man who refused to do a kinsman's part could not be applied to the Law in any way; nor could we conceive of the Law condemning itself. Hence we must needs dismiss the idea that the "nearer kinsman" represents the Law.

We ask the reader to refer again, in this connection, to the seventh chapter of Romans, where we find the statement that "the woman

which hath an husband is bound *by the law* to her husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband die she is loosed from *the law* of her husband" (Rom. 1:2). In verse 4 the apostle applies this illustration, saying:

> "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is *raised from the dead* that we should bring forth fruits unto God."

Here again it is usually said that the first husband was the Law, and that when freed from the Law the one set free can be joined in a fruitful union with Christ. But again there are insuperable obstacles to this view. For, in the first place, there was no marriage between man and the Law, and in the very nature of things there could have been none. The language of verse 2 also forbids absolutely such an application of the figure. For the Law is not the husband, but *that which binds the woman to her husband* so long as *the husband* lives. Consequently, when the *husband* dies (for the law does not and cannot die) the woman is not only released from her husband, but is loosed from *the law of the husband,* that is to say, from all obligation towards him or his name. Whatever the meaning might possibly be, one thing at least is clear, namely, that the Law is not the husband.

Another view of the nearer kinsman (a view we lately found in a little book containing many

excellent and spiritual comments on Ruth) is that he represents *the angels.* For, says the writer of that book, the angels were nearer akin to us men than was the Lord Jesus Christ, and the angels did not and could not redeem us. But, we must ask, when did the angels ever attempt to redeem us? When was there any proposal that they should do so? Or when was there any such scene as took place, according to law, when the next of kin repudiated his legal obligation and refused to redeem? When did the desolate widow ever spit in the face of the angels, and loose the shoe from off their feet? And when was the angelic race ever stigmatized by a name of disgrace?

It should be clear to all, we think, that, if Boaz represents a living Person, even the Lord Jesus Christ Who became *really Man,* in order to assume and discharge the heavy obligations of the "Goel" or Redeemer of *men,* then the kinsman who was nearer than Boaz *must* represent a *man* also. And, we repeat, there *is* such a man, and one, moreover, who corresponds quite closely to "the kinsman of whom Boaz spake." That kinsman was one who was ready enough to profess his willingness to redeem when it was merely a question of buying a field. And he evidently was one who looked out sharply for his own interests. For when Boaz spoke to him of redeeming a parcel of land which Naomi was about to sell, he promptly

said, "I will redeem it." But when the obligation of taking the Moabitish woman to wife, "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance," was presented to him, then he drew back and found an excuse, saying: "I cannot redeem it lest I mar mine own inheritance." That man was quite willing to repudiate his obligations under the law of God where his own personal interests might suffer. Apparently God's law was nothing to him in comparison with his own advantage and selfish desire.

Surely, then, if Boaz is a figure of the New Man, by Whom the work of Redemption has been accomplished, and Who magnified the Law and made it honorable, then the "nearer kinsman" is a figure of the "old man," who is of the earth, earthy, and who, when tested by the law of God, was manifested as a failure in respect to every requirement thereof.

The "old man" was our next of kin; and to him pertained in the first instance the right, and also the obligation, to redeem the inheritance, and to perform the part of a kinsman in all the three particulars which we have pointed out. We are reminded of what the Law said: "or *if he be able,* he may redeem himself" (Lev. 25:49). *Could* he do so then, and *would* he? Was he *able* and was he *willing* to "do the part of a kinsman?" That must be brought to a test; and if he failed to meet the test, he must

be put aside, in order that the One Who was next after him might *stand in his shoes.*

We have had occasion several times in the course of these meditations to refer to the great Resurrection Chapter, the fifteenth of 1 Corinthians. In that chapter we have an illuminating reference to these two men.

> "And so it is written. The *first man* Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.
>
> "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
>
> "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.
>
> "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.
>
> "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

According to this passage, and to the whole teaching of Scripture, "the first man," that is to say the *nearest* kinsman, was the "*natural* man." He came first: and every opportunity was given him to meet God's righteous requirements, and to fulfil the great and blessed purposes for which man was created in the likeness of God and placed in the earth, and in a position of dominion over all the creatures upon it. He failed in his responsibility, lost his inheritance, and fell through transgression into

the bondage of sin and death. But, after his fall, every opportunity and ample time during the four thousand years before Christ were given him to make redemption. The "Spiritual" Man came afterward. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, *to redeem* them that were under the law" (Gal. 4: 4, 5).

That first man is "of the *earth, earthy*"; and so are we all by nature. From this it appears clearly that the first man is *nearer akin* to us than the Second Man, Who is "the Lord from heaven." However, those whom He redeems, and who by nature bore the image of the earthy man, "shall also bear the image of the Heavenly." For they are brought into the relation of children to God through the work of their Redeemer.

Earlier in the same chapter we read these words:

> "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.
>
> "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.
>
> "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15: 20-22).

The words "in Christ shall all be made alive" are a promise that Christ, our Redeemer, will

raise up "all" whom He has redeemed by His blood, that being, as we have seen, the most important obligation which the law imposed upon the kinsman. The word "all" in this passage means *all the redeemed,* as clearly appears by the next verse: "they *that are Christ's* at His coming."

The first man Adam, and the Second Man Jesus Christ, in their relations towards the law, and in their relations with the purposes of God, are spoken of in a very important passage, Romans 5:12-21. "By one man, sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men." This created the necessity for redemption, not only to deliver men from the servitude of sin, but to bring them out of the dominion of death. So Adam is presented as "the figure of Him that was to come," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom is the free gift of God's grace through redemption. Hence the effect of Adam's transgression is counterbalanced by that of Christ's act of righteousness in suffering for sins; as it is written: "For as by *one man's* disobedience many were made sinners, so by the *obedience of One* shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). This speaks plainly of the payment of the redemption-price by the Lord Jesus Christ in His "obedience" to His Father's command, that is to say His obedience "unto death, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). As He said concerning the life He was

to lay down as the price of redemption: "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *This commandment have I received of My Father*" (John 10:18). And as He said at another time, when going forth to meet His betrayers, "As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (John 14:31).

The subject is continued in the sixth of Romans, where we find, as the result of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they who believe in Him are freed from the dominion and servitude of sin; and that they receive God's free-gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the case of Ruth there was an obstacle in the way, in the person of that nearer kinsman, which must needs be removed ere Boaz could do the part of a kinsman to Ruth; and we can easily see a similar situation in Romans 6, where there is likewise an obstacle in the way of our union with Christ, which must be gotten out of the way. That obstacle is called "*our old man*" (Rom. 6:6), our *nearest* kinsman; and just as Boaz took the necessary steps to put aside the prior claims of the nearer kinsman, so the Lord Jesus Christ, by His own death, put an end to "our old man." For this great fact is here made known to us, namely, "That our *old man* is (has been) crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not *serve sin*." Thus, by the Lord's

death, the way is swept clear of the prior claims and pretensions of our next of kin: so that He Who is both able and willing to redeem, may stand in the relationship which permits Him to accomplish that great work on our behalf.

As matters stood during the time the Lord was here as a Man among men, He had the *power* to redeem, and the *willingness,* but *not the relationship;* for one stood between. Our "old man," the "natural man," had the relationship, but had neither the *power* nor the *will* to redeem. He could not pay the price, nor *would* he if he could. Hence he *must be disposed of;* and this our Lord accomplished by His own death. As Naomi said to Ruth, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be *in rest* until he have *finished the work this day"* (Ruth 3:18). So it was with the Lord. He gave Himself no rest until He had *finished the work* His Father gave Him to do; but "When He had by Himself purged our sins" then He "*sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:4). "For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His" (Heb. 4:10). And there all who come to Him can "find rest."

There could be no Redemption for us, and no Rest, through our nearer kinsman, "our old man." All the great achievements of the man of the earth—the natural man—are accom-

plished through the power of money—"silver and gold." The great question involved in all *his* enterprises is the question of *finance.* How much will it cost? And where will the money come from? Those questions being settled, the affair, whatever it may be, can proceed with every prospect of success. On the other hand, whatever cannot be accomplished through *money,* cannot, in the estimation of the natural man, be accomplished *at all.* Hence the great force, in this connection, of the words of the 49th Psalm, verses 6-9:

> "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can *by any means redeem his brother,* nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, [or costly,] and it ceaseth forever); that he should still live forever, and not see corruption."

Redemption, therefore, was wholly beyond the means of our old man, the nearer kinsman. But there was One Who *could* pay the price, and Who was willing to do so. And now the great transaction is "finished," the full price has been paid; our heavy liabilities are all discharged; every righteous claim has been met; and He Who on the Cross made complete satisfaction for all that was charged against us, has now entered into the holy place, "having obtained *eternal redemption*" (Heb. 9:12).

XVIII

RAISING UP THE NAME OF THE DEAD

WE who believe in Jesus Christ were, by our natural birth, brought into the family of the old man, and by our spiritual birth have been brought into the family of the New Man. It is our responsibility, therefore, to cultivate the appropriate *family likeness,* by a constant putting off of the traits and characteristics of the old man, which have a tendency to cling to us, and by a putting on of the characteristics of the New Man. To this end is the admonition: "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation (or manner of life), the *old man,* which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye *put on the new man,* which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). Among the things pertaining to the old man, and which are to be "put off," are mentioned lying, stealing, corrupt speech, bitterness, wrath, anger, malice, foolish talking and jesting; and among the things to be "put on" are kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness; and these admonitions are given in view of the approach of "the *day of redemption*" (Eph. 4:30).

Referring again to the seventh of Romans, we deem it clear that it contemplates our old man as the first husband to which we were bound by the law *as long as he lived.* We were wedded, as it were, to the old nature, the "flesh" (see Rom. 7:5, 18, 25), which is but another name for the "old man" of chapter six. That union could be broken only by *death;* and for this purpose the *death of Christ* is imputed to us. The correct reading of verse 6 is that given in the margin; for it is not the *law* that died, but *the man* who was under the law. So we should read: "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead (or having died) to that wherein we were held." It is the same thought which Paul elsewhere expressed in the words: "But I through the law died to the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:19, 20, R. V.).

Thus *by death* the bond is broken which bound us to the old man, and the way is thus cleared for us to be "married to Another, even to Him Who is *raised from the dead,* that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). And that Boaz is a beautiful type or figure of Christ in resurrection has been already pointed out.

The fourth chapter of Ruth is occupied mainly with the incidents whereby the nearer kinsman was set aside, and the way cleared for Boaz to assume the obligations of the kinsman toward Ruth. The matter was dealt with as one of

great moment. We read that Boaz went up to the gate, which is the place where business of importance was transacted in public view. The Redeemer's work is a matter of vital importance to all men. It has been accomplished in the most public manner. When Paul proclaimed before King Herod Agrippa the sufferings and the resurrection of Christ, he could boldly say: "For the king knoweth of these things. * * For I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him. *For this thing was not done in a corner*" (Acts 26:26). And not only so, but the very things which the Redeemer was to do were foretold, even to their minute details, in many prophecies; insomuch that the proclamation of the gospel is merely the announcement that the things which *were* to be done *have now been done.* Even as the Apostle, in the same address before King Agrippa, when describing his own ministry, said:

> "Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying *none other things* than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22, 23).

In the impressive scene at the gate of the city described in Ruth 4 we observe that *ten men* of

the elders of the city were summoned to preside over the transaction and to see that everything was done strictly according to law. The number *ten* is suggestive of the law, as it brings to mind the ten commandments; and we know that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled both *the law,* in meeting every righteous claim of God's inflexible justice against those whom He came to save, and also *the prophets,* in suffering to the last detail "all that was written of Him" (see Acts 13:29; John 19:28; Luke 24:44-46).

The prominence given to the subject of Redemption in the last chapter of Ruth is well exemplified by verse 4, in which the word "redeem" occurs five times. In verses 4 and 5 the *right* and also the *obligation* of the kinsman are clearly laid down; and it is very plainly stated that the right to acquire the field *cannot be separated from the obligation to marry the widow, and so to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.*

That is precisely what the nearer kinsman of Ruth wished to do. He would have possessed himself of the field, but would have ignored his obligation to *the living* and to *the dead.* And such is the thought of the natural man, who sets himself to recover and repossess the earth, and vainly dreams he is accomplishing that grand object through his civilization, inventions and sciences; but who sets aside the *obligations* of the law of God, and *ignores the presence of sin*

and death in the world. But vain is the thought of man, as the words of Boaz declare:

> "Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou *must* buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, *to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.*"

But this was too much for that "kinsman." Just what passed through his mind does not appear; for the reason given by him—"I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance"—was probably insincere, or at least incomplete. But, whatever may have been the real motives actuating him, the outcome was that he accepted the condemnation of the law in the form of public disgrace rather than assume the heavy obligation which the law of God imposed upon him. "Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it *for thee.* And he drew off his shoe."

The wearing of shoes distinguished *sons* of the family from domestic servants or *slaves.* "Put shoes on his feet" (Luke 15:22) was the father's way of placing the returning prodigal upon the footing of a *son* in the household. For "the servant (slave) abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever. If *the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (John 8:35, 36).

Our Redeemer, being "*Son* over His own house" is One Who is able to make us "free in-

deed." The shoes of Moses' feet must come off in the presence of the Lord; for Moses was but a servant in God's house, and he could not redeem his brother, nor raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. "For if there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Gal. 3:21). But there was no power in the man of earth to fulfil God's holy law. For he is subject to "the law of sin," the first principle of which is to please one's self. The mind of the flesh, therefore, "is enmity against God, because it is *not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Rom. 8:7).

Accordingly, the failure of the nearer kinsman was manifested before all the people. His disgrace was publicly announced, and *Boaz stood in his shoes.*

> "And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which

> two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem: And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman."

Thus Boaz assumed and undertook to discharge every duty of the kinsman according to the law; even as Christ, when coming into the world, said: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to *do Thy will,* O God" (Heb. 10:7).

Boaz thus brought the desolate Gentile widow into the royal line; and upon that union was pronounced a blessing which promised the building up of a great house, compared to the house of Israel, "which Rachel and Leah did build." This points to the great household of faith, "the Israel of God," which is now being gathered in this age of gospel-preaching, and which is founded upon the Redeemer's Name and His finished work (Acts 15:14).

But the blessing does not stop there. When Ruth's son, Obed (which means *one who serves*) was born, the women said to Naomi: "Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a *restorer of thy life,* and a nourisher of thine old age." Considering Naomi, as we have done, to be a type of the nation Israel, we are reminded

by these words of Israel's future national restoration, which is to be a further result of the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15).

Thus the history of Ruth merges finally into that of her great kinsman, who once was all unknown to her: and who indeed was separated from her by a barrier which only the power of God could remove. The word of God, the good news telling of bread in Judah, found her a desolate Gentile widow in the country of Moab, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But once the Word of God reached her heart, producing faith which comes only in that way, it brought her out of her native land, and out of the old life and its associations; it brought her to a person by whom her every need was met and her future fully secured, and it finally united her in life to him, in the most tender and most sacred of all human relationships. And it was *grace* at every step of the way, "grace upon grace."

How like this is the experience of every sinner from among the Gentiles who, through the Gospel of God's grace, turns to Him, believing in Jesus Christ! How wonderful that, in our "far-off" place of separation from God and from the *covenants of promise,* He did not leave

us without a Kinsman! And what a Kinsman! What wealth was His, and what power! And what love—"the love of Christ which passeth knowledge"! And what grace, to devote that boundless wealth to the redemption of sinners, ransoming them from sin and death, and enriching them beyond all that we could ask or think!

> *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty might be rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9).

DATE DUE

NOV 27 1985			
MAR 2 5 1974			
MAY 8 1974			
DEC 9 1977			
NOV 1 1978			
DEC 1 8 1978			
DEC 2 9 1980			
MAY 1 3 1982			
NOV 2 2 1982			
DEC 1 0 1985			
OCT 2 9 1986			
NOV 1 0 1986			
MAY 3 1 1988			

222.3507
M457

Mauro, Philip.

AUTHOR

Ruth: the satisfied stranger.

TITLE

222.3507
M457 Mauro, Philip.
Ruth: the satisfied stranger.

47578